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THE HISTORIC COLLAPSE OF PATRIARCHAL POWER: INVESTIGATING THE ARISTOCRACY'S CRISIS OF MASCULINITY AT MID-CENTURY

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THE HISTORIC COLLAPSE OF PATRIARCHAL POWER: INVESTIGATING
THE ARISTOCRACY'S CRISIS OF MASCULINITY
AT MID-CENTURY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
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Accepted by:
Dr. Stephanie Barczewski, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Although most scholars locate the crisis of masculinity in the 1880s and 90s, with the emergence of the New Woman and the fin de siècle, through the presentation of narratives, journals, letters, newspaper articles, satirical cartoons, and novels that focus on the aristocracy's role in the Crimean War, interaction with divorce proceedings, and the fallen aristocratic man in sensation fiction, I suggest that the aristocracy's crisis of masculinity happened long before the end of the nineteenth century. Since scholars do not often make a designation between the aristocracy and the middle-class crisis of masculinity, this work seeks to interrogate these phenomena and ultimately suggest that they were very different events. In doing so, I hope to challenge scholars' work that locates this crisis as a result of, and reaction to, the emergence of women from the private home into the public sphere, and reveal the nuances and complicated ways in which aristocratic men endured crises at mid-century.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Roman, for all of his love and support. Thank you for your unwavering faith in my ability to be both a student and a new mother, and your encouragement when at times these two roles seemed impossible to reconcile. You make all of this possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Stephanie Barczewski, for her continued guidance and advice during this process. Your generosity of time and attention, and your patience and insightful suggestions, have made this thesis a reality. I would also like to thank my readers Dr. Megan Shockley and Dr. Kimberly Manganelli for their time and support.

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INTRODUCTION

When Scarlett O'Hara discovers that she owes three hundred dollars in taxes on the family plantation, Tara, she seeks out Ashley Wilkes in hopes that he will help her rescue the family estate. Recently home after the conclusion of the Civil War, a defeated Ashley resides, with his wife and baby, on the O'Hara's plantation since his own family's home was burned to the ground. Despite her troubles, Scarlett's love for Ashley is never far from her mind. She walks through the orchard and hears the intermittent strike of the axe as Ashley splits rails to replace a fence the Yankees burned. Seeing him in tattered clothing, sweat dripping from his brow, Scarlett is struck by how out of place Ashley is. She thinks: "His hands were not made for work or his body for anything but broadcloth and fine linen. God intended him to sit in a great house, talking with pleasant people, playing the piano and writing things which sounded beautiful and made no sense whatsoever."¹ Ashley, a true southern gentleman, and formerly an officer in the Confederate Army, is home again, but has very little to call his own. He wears clothing that previously would have been unfit for a slave, and uses hands meant to play the piano for manual labor. His life, and, consequently, his identity, has been dismantled as a result of the erosion of his pre-Civil War existence.

In hopes of unburdening herself, Scarlett reveals to Ashley the need to produce three hundred dollars to pay the taxes on Tara. Annoyed by his silent reaction, Scarlett prompts him: "Well, doesn't it occur to you that we'll have to get the money somewhere?" Ashley replies, 'Yes, but where?' 'I'm asking you,' she retorts, annoyed.

¹ Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind* (New York: Warner Books, 1993), 516.

The sense of unburdening herself had disappeared.”² As Ashley stares wistfully into the unknown, Scarlett realizes that he is of little help to her. Turning to her, Ashley remarks: “In the end what will happen will be what has happened whenever a civilization breaks up. The people who have brains and courage come through and the ones who haven’t are winnowed out. At least, it has been interesting, if not comfortable, to witness a *Gottterdammerung* [...] A dusk of the gods. Unfortunately, we Southerners did think we were gods.”³ Ashley’s reflection becomes a lamentation as he looks over the burned and ravaged landscape that once was lush and fertile with life and possibility. Recognizing that his civilization has been destroyed, wiped out, and that he is forced to start anew, the knowledge that this transformation requires a courageous man presents a moment of crisis for Ashley who has difficulty comprehending a different way of life:

You came to me, hoping I could help you. Well, I can’t. My home is gone and all the money that I so took for granted I never realized I had it. And I am fitted for nothing in this world, for the world I belonged in has gone. I can’t help you, Scarlett, except by learning with as good grace as possible to be a clumsy farmer. And that won’t keep Tara for you. Don’t you think I realize the bitterness of our situation, living here on your charity—Oh, yes, Scarlett, your charity. I can never repay you what you’ve done for me and for mine out of the kindness of your heart. I realize it more acutely every day. And every day I see more clearly how helpless I am to cope with what has come on us all—Every day my accursed shrinking from realities makes it harder for me to face the new realities. In other words, Scarlett, I am a coward [...] It isn’t that I mind splitting logs here in the mud, but I do mind what it stands for. I do mind, very much, the loss of the beauty of the old life I loved. Scarlett, before the war, life was beautiful. I belonged in that life. I was a part of it. And now it is gone and I am out of place in this new life, and I am afraid. Scarlett, there is no going back. And this which is facing all of us now is worse than war and worse than prison—and, to me, worse than death.⁴

² Mitchell, 516.

³ *Ibid.*, 517.

⁴ Mitchell, 517-520.

For Ashley, the destruction of his civilization signals a moment of defeat as he knows that who he once was can never be preserved in this new and foreign life. He is a fragmented man, broken by reality and momentous change in which he has no say. For him, this reality is worse than war, or prison, and in a moment of grievous hyperbolism, worse than death. Feeling that his very identity and existence is compromised transforms Ashley from a confident man into a shadow of who he once was.

Southern aristocratic men after the Civil War experienced crises of masculinity as an outpost of crises of identity. Their way of life was both metaphorically and literally destroyed as Yankees disintegrated their lands, carpetbaggers acquired vast wealth, and former slaves circulated within southern society. As such, these men, like Ashley Wilkes, struggled to navigate the new world they were forced into, and while they often continued to live and breathe, they were essentially dead beings. Lacking agency, these men experienced social deaths which left them lost in their ever-changing world as their participation within society diminished. For these aristocratic men, the second half of the 1860s into the 1870s represented a moment of transition in which they believed held no place for them and their pre-bellum ideals. Although Ashley Wilkes eventually works for Scarlett as the manager of her lumber mill, this societal construction confirms his strangeness in this new land as he again allows Scarlet to support him, both financially and emotionally, when he cannot fully support himself.

Michael Kimmel argues that in the United States men were in crisis after the Civil War due to the “feminization of American culture.”⁵ Citing all classes, he suggests that suffrage was seen as the ultimate invasion of the male domain by women in their drive to save the Republic. “To oppose women’s suffrage was a patriotic act. And those who supported women’s advance, or progressive reformism generally, were less than American, hence less than real men.”⁶ Thus, men’s anti-suffrage organizations sprang up around the nation to rally men behind the masculine cause and prove themselves as purveyors of manliness. While this certainly may have contributed to the crisis in masculinity after the Civil War, it is clear that for the aristocracy, their worries over their masculinity oftentimes stemmed from economic, rather than social, conditions. On the Southern upper-class men, Anne Sarah Rubin writes: “Southern white men’s identity had long been bound up in their sense of themselves as chivalrous and fierce fighting men, a self-image dashed with the loss of the war. Add depression to a culture that, because of slavery, had long devalued both agricultural and industrial labor, and it appeared that the South might never be able to lift itself out of its economic and spiritual doldrums.”⁷ Although the “New South” turned to labor and industry to revive their crippled land and economy (often working in constellation with Yankees to do so), the “Old South”, like Ashley Wilkes, lamented the loss of their former lives and struggled to find a place to call their own.

⁵ Michael S. Kimmel, “The Contemporary ‘Crisis’ of Masculinity in Historical Perspective, in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men’s Studies* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 143.

⁶ Kimmel, 144.

⁷ Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 173.

Although an ocean away, I contend that the British aristocracy, too, experienced a crisis of masculinity in the 1860s. Although most scholars locate the crisis of masculinity in Britain in the 1880s and 90s, with the emergence of the New Woman and the fin de siècle, through the presentation of narratives, journals, letters, newspaper articles, satirical cartoons, and novels that focus on the aristocracy's role in the Crimean War, interaction with divorce proceedings, and the fallen aristocratic men in sensation fiction, I suggest that this crisis of masculinity for the aristocracy happened long before the end of the nineteenth century. Since scholars do not often make a designation between the aristocracy and the middle-class crisis of masculinity, this work seeks to interrogate these different phenomena and ultimately suggest that they were very different events. In doing so, I hope to challenge scholars' work that locates this crisis as a result of, and reaction to, the emergence of women from the private home into the public sphere, and reveal the nuanced and complicated ways in which aristocratic men endured crises at mid-century.

While Elaine Showalter, amongst many other scholars I will explore in the next chapter, has argued that the crisis of masculinity occurs with the emergence of the New Woman and the fin de siècle, aristocratic men were in crisis long before those phenomena due to their diminished understanding of their place amidst immense changes in Victorian England. Quoting Regenia Gagnier, Showalter recognizes the tremendous impact the shifting world had on the male populace: "Men, too, faced changes in their lives and sexual identities. In England, there was crisis in the 1890s of the male on all levels—economic, political, psychological, as producer, as power, as lover [...] The crisis of

masculinity marked an awakening consciousness of what it meant to be a man.”⁸ While this is certainly true, it is clear through evidentiary material that aristocratic men grappled with their position and masculinity prior to the fin de siècle and struggled to understand their place and purpose as early as the 1850s.

One of the early signs that the aristocracy was enduring a crisis of identity and masculinity was evidenced by the press’s treatment of the aristocratic officers’ involvement in foreign crises. Attitudes at home and in the press illustrated the growing dissatisfaction with men of power abroad to secure British victory and thus perpetuate a strong British national identity. Consequently, the changing role of men within British society from the late-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries can be traced to a number of historical moments in which tension between the domestic and the foreign exist. First, the reception of soldiers during the Crimean War initiated negative public discourse concerning the British public’s confidence in their soldiers abroad. A look at General Lord George Paget’s journal reveals the extent of his own uncertainty regarding his role, and that of his superiors, during the Crimean War. This dissatisfaction contributed to debates in Parliament concerning England’s role overseas; this tension between legislators and soldiers ultimately raised questions about the competency of the men fighting in foreign territory. In fact, at home in Britain, the hero of the Crimean War turned out to be a heroine in the form of do-gooder nurse, Florence Nightingale. War correspondents detailed the horrendous treatment wounded soldiers received on the front, ultimately prompting nurses to take posts as close to the action as they were allowed.

⁸ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 9.

Florence Nightingale emerged from the Crimean War as a symbol of goodness and competency as evidenced by a report written about her in *The Times*:

She is a 'ministering angel' without any exaggeration in these hospitals, and as her slender form glides quietly along each corridor, every poor fellow's face softens with gratitude at the sight of her. When all the medical officers have retired for the night and silence and darkness have settled down upon those miles of prostrate sick, she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand, making her solitary rounds.⁹

Unlike the men fighting on the front, Nightingale and her fellow nurses achieved respect and admiration from the British public.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Crimean War, Britain again was involved in a foreign dispute, this time in India, in the form of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Although I will not explore this incident in great detail, it is worth mentioning here to fully understand the moments that challenged the aristocracy's masculine identity. Reacting against cartridges that were rumored to be greased, and thus contaminated, with cow and pig fat offensive to the sepoys' religious beliefs, the Bengal Army retaliated against the British, culminating in a massacre of British men, women, and children.¹⁰ Since the Bengal Army was composed of high-caste Indians, a salient fear of being ostracized and polluted by these cartridges prompted a rebellion within the Bengal Army against the seemingly unsympathetic British. At home, press reports of these conflicts criticized the East India Company (EIC), locating responsibility for the mutiny on the shoulders of the EIC officers and the British Government for their mishandling of the situation. *Reynold's Newspaper* wrote on July 5, 1857:

⁹ Edward Tias Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1913), 237.

¹⁰ Kim Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857: Rumours, Conspiracies and the Making of the Indian Uprising* (London: Peter Lang, 2010).

Our sympathies are with the insurrectionists...with the oppressed struggling with their tyrants—with the tortured, plundered, enslaved, and insulted natives of India who are virtually slaves to a haughty and incapable aristocracy comprised of some twenty families who hold sway over Britain too.”¹¹

The aristocratic officers’ failure to secure sepoy favor created a divide within the empire, thus resulting in the deaths of many British citizens. Additionally, this moment suggests not just a military mutiny, but also a race war in which mutineers made it clear that they would rather live under Mughal rule than under British imperialism. Ultimately, this conflict and its casualties contributed to the denigration of public opinion concerning empowered aristocratic males and their ability to protect and preserve British national identity.

These conflicts abroad forced British men to question their roles as patriarchs and progenitors of both foreign and domestic power. Ultimately, these struggles suggest a weakening of British national identity, which traversed oceans and land to take up residence at home in Britain, reminding men of their failures. Not only were men challenged abroad, but with the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, their sovereign power was challenged at home, as well. Recognizing the blow men received abroad and at home, Lillian Nayder suggests that men’s identity and secure social place began to crumble seemingly at once: “While 1857 was the year of the Indian Mutiny, it was also the year in which the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act was passed by Parliament, creating a civil divorce court in England, and altering the law in such a way that divorce was no longer solely a male prerogative. The Act also stipulated that wives

¹¹ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 109-110.

legally separated from their husbands were entitled to the same property rights as single women. Thus at the same time in which imperial rule was threatened in India, the sanctity of the marriage bond and its patriarchal privileges were challenged at home.”¹² In this way, natives abroad and women at home were seen simultaneously as a threat to Britain’s long-held patriarchal system. Thus, these changes in the 1850s suggest the shifting nature of male identity, as their power was questioned during the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny, and mitigated through the law as evidenced by the Matrimonial Causes Act. It is only natural, then, that for some, specifically aristocrats as suggested here, that male agency and hegemony would be compromised and ultimately dismantled.

To understand the ways in which divorce, a rare occurrence before the 1857 Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act, affected aristocratic males, I will turn to two divorce cases—first Lord Ellenborough and Lady Jane Digby’s in 1830, and then to Lord Lincoln and Lady Susan, whose divorce was passed in 1850—in an effort to explore the ways in which aristocratic women, before the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act, reacted against their covered identities in hopes of securing freedom and movement from their marriages. Consequently, and more importantly for this thesis, these women’s actions pushed their husband’s into crises of masculinity as they become fodder for gossip in which their roles as protectors and patriarchs were questioned, and at times, condemned. Ultimately, these divorce cases illustrate the waning power and authority of aristocratic men to maintain a hegemonic position over their wives and lives. The passing

¹² Lillian Nayder, “Rebellious Sepoys and Bigamous Wives: The Indian Mutiny and Marriage Law Reform in *Lady Audley’s Secret*,” in *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 37.

of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act further reduced men's power over women as their legal rights were heightened under the law.

Lastly, sensation fiction of the 1860s provides an opportunity from which to explore the treatment of aristocratic men in literature. This specific genre and the literary environments it created provided a space for characters to explore and acknowledge the changing atmosphere inherent in Britain's political, legislation, and social evolution. Since many stories were appropriated from newspaper headlines, sensation fiction's engagement with the issues of the day created a genre that became social commentary on the immense transformation England was undergoing. An interrogation of Wilkie Collins's *Basil* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* suggests that men grappled with their position and masculinity prior to the fin de siècle as evidenced by the heroine-prescribed social deaths of Basil and George Talboys. These aristocratic men fail to socially survive amidst the tremendous political and social changes in Britain, and are thus ultimately rendered as socially dead, feminized figures whose crisis of masculinity is fully realized when they reside as dependents of their sisters. This transformation from patriarchal figures to ornaments who disappear within the domestic sphere ultimately suggests that these men become strangers in their own land, effectively confirming the crystallization of the aristocracy's crisis of masculinity.

CHAPTER ONE

History Come Undone: Historicizing the Aristocracy's Crisis of Masculinity

The crisis of masculinity is most often regarded by scholars as a late Victorian phenomenon that occurred due to the emergence of the New Woman and the fin de siècle. A historiographical investigation reveals that most scholars recognize the middle class as those who most acutely experienced a crisis of masculinity in the 1880s and 90s, a move that not only fails to fully interrogate the immense changes occurring at mid-century, but one that also disregards the demarcation of class experience. A review of this literature, collected from both historical and sociological sources, ignores the 1860s as the moment of crisis for aristocratic men, an argument I will provide evidence and support for in the following chapters. Ultimately, this scholarship neglects the nuanced ways in which aristocratic men's patriarchal authority was questioned, and, at times, dismissed through various historical and cultural moments beginning in the 1850s.

To provide a theoretical framework to the discussion of masculinity, a look to R. W. Connell's *Masculinities* proves instructive as his coinage of *hegemonic masculinity* appears often in both sociological and historical works on gender and masculinity studies. Essentially, hegemonic masculinity is the culturally normative ideal of male behavior—it is competitive and reflects a tendency for males to seek out opportunities to dominate other males and subordinate women. Two key factors include: domination and marginalization. On this, Connell writes:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of

the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. When conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. Hegemony, then, is a historically mobile relation.¹³

In turning to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, in which a ruling class or group retains power over others, Connell locates hegemonic activity as both a political and social endeavor. Although most men do not consciously engage in moments of hegemonic masculinity, Connell recognizes that the majority of men certainly gain from this practice, since "they benefit from the patriarchal dividend," which becomes the advantage men in general gain from the subordination of women.¹⁴ This construction suggests a system of gender politics that privileges the male being as supreme simply for being male.

Masculinity and femininity, Connell assures his readers, are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition. In this conceptualization, "masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation."¹⁵ Thus, for Connell, masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity. This certainly suggests the tenuous nature of masculinity and the abstract condition that it presents as a classification of identity. Leonore Davidoff, recognizing the precarious nature of such a condition, suggests: "The very derivation of the word, 'gender', its relation to 'gens' or orders, indicates its centrality to classification systems, particularly those stressing notions of difference. Certainly in Western tradition,

¹³ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 77.

¹⁴ Connell, 79.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

gender has operated as a fundamental organizing category at the level of both social relations and the structure of personal identity.”¹⁶ Additionally, Connell’s work echoes Lacan’s construction of the Symbolic, in which a set of differentiated signifiers suggests the presence or absence between the signifier and signified, ultimately suggesting opposition and tension.¹⁷ In understanding that masculinity cannot exist without femininity, and vice versa, these terms nearly collapse in on themselves as mere signifiers of conditions, positions, and realities. Setting aside the complicated nature of language and its system of differentiation, Connell’s construction of gender asks us to challenge his conceptualization of power relations, since, as he suggests: “Power relations show the most visible evidence of crisis tendencies in a historic collapse of the legitimacy of the patriarchal power, and a global movement for the emancipation of women.”¹⁸ While these conditions certainly contribute to the crisis of masculinity, this assertion privileges a zero-sum mentality in which women only gain power at the expense and diminishment of men’s own power and authority. Instead, I argue that men are the culprits of their own collapse of patriarchal power.

Providing perhaps one of the most comprehensive and interesting engagements with the aristocracy, Connell traces the fall of the gentry and ultimately locates this displacement in the mobilization of women’s rights in the nineteenth century. This argument echoes other scholars’ work that also situates the crisis of masculinity as a fin

¹⁶ Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

¹⁷ Philippe Julien, *Jacques Lacan’s Return to Freud: The Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 56.

¹⁸ Connell, 84.

de siècle phenomenon. Although he does not focus exclusively on Britain, in turning to the expansion of industrial production as a moment that challenged gentry masculinity, however, Connell does, albeit briefly, acknowledge that for the gentry, crisis of masculinity occurred before the end of the century. This focus on economic and class structure provides an argument not presented in this thesis, so I will pause momentarily to contextualize Connell's work. On the relation between economic status and class as a culprit of the gentry's crisis of masculinity, Connell writes: "The gradual displacement of the gentry by businessmen and bureaucrats in the metropolitan countries was paralleled by the transformation of peasant populations into industrial and urban working classes. The expansion of industrial production saw the emergence of forms of masculinity organized around wage-earning capacity, mechanical skills, domestic patriarchy and combative solidarity along wage earners."¹⁹ Thus, the gentry was no longer masculine because they were not wage earners, and as such, they became an archaic and passive class who failed to modernize with the changing times. Money as a currency of exchange and masculinity thus initiated a decline of economic and political power for the aristocracy.

Before the nineteenth century, Connell recognizes that gentry masculinity was closely integrated with the state as they provided local administration and staffed the military apparatus: "The gentry provided army and navy officers, and often recruited the rank and file themselves. At the intersection between this direct involvement in violence and the ethic of family honour was the institution of the duel. Willingness to face an

¹⁹ Connell, 196.

opponent in a potentially lethal one-to-one combat was a key test of gentry masculinity.”²⁰ Despite the erosion of dueling practices, Connell continues to recognize the gentry as agents of masculine activity until the alteration in gender politics:

The nineteenth century saw a historic change in gender politics, the emergence of feminism as a form of mass politics—the mobilization for women’s rights, especially the suffrage, in public arenas. Gentry and middle-class women were active in reforms of moral and domestic customs in the nineteenth century which sharply challenged the sexual prerogatives of gentry men [...] The conditions for the maintenance of patriarchy changed with these challenges, and the kind of masculinity which could be hegemonic changed in response.²¹

Since the women’s suffrage movement in Britain did not begin until the 1870s, with the formation of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage, this form of mass politics took place toward the end of the century, confirming this moment as the crisis of masculinity for all classes. In declaring that men’s political supremacy was challenged by women, and thus transformed into a state of erodibility, Connell and other scholars perpetuate a zero-sum mentality that ultimately limits a nuanced interrogation of the crisis of masculinity, specifically here, of the aristocracy. This construction ultimately fails to understand masculinity as anything more than a conceptualization of power—historic, economic, political, and social—that is in decline with the rise and acquisition of women’s power.

John Tosh, the leading historian exploring Victorian masculinity, has done much work on the topic. In his seminal text “What should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain,” Tosh asserts that a gendered study of men is

²⁰ Connell, 190.

²¹ Ibid., 192.

necessary to any serious feminist historical project. This very statement, written in 1994, suggests the nascent quality of the discipline of masculinity studies as a subordinate entity to feminist studies. Although Tosh focuses on the middle class, he does momentarily address the aristocracy's masculinity: "The aristocracy, in keeping with its traditional claim to be a military as well as a ruling caste, took sporting prowess and physical hardiness much more seriously, but their code of manliness was of declining influence from the 1830s onwards. Only at times of popular alarm about the nation's military readiness, like the late 1850s and 60s, and the first decade of the twentieth century, did vestiges of aristocratic manliness reappear in the mainstream."²² This moment, for Tosh, inadvertently suggests the Crimean War, the 1857 Indian Mutiny, and the Great War as displays of power for aristocratic men, while this thesis refutes that very notion, instead locating the military conflicts of the 1850s as the beginning of decline for aristocratic male power and domination, which ultimately culminated in their crisis of identity and masculinity.

After presenting discussion of the New Woman as a threat to the patriarchal order, Tosh defines the "crisis of masculinity" as a situation in which the traditionally dominant forms of masculinity have become so blurred that men no longer know what is required to be a 'real man'—either because of structural changes or because of challenging critique, or both.²³ Tosh locates this crisis in the 1890s and asserts that masculinity is both a psychic and social identity:

²² John Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *History Workshop* (No. 38, 1994), 182.

²³ Tosh, 193.

The dominant code of manliness in the 1890s, so hostile to emotional expression and so intolerant of both androgyny and homosexuality, can be interpreted as a by-product of a raised imperial consciousness—especially with regard to the imperial frontier and the manly qualities required there. But this is to see manliness as rooted only in the public sphere. I am suggesting that its late nineteenth-century version was also the outward symptom of a need to repress the feminine within, –a psychic universal maybe, but one which had been greatly exacerbated by the distinctive domestic regime of the middle and upper classes over the previous generation or so.²⁴

This discussion of “repressing the feminine within,” alludes to the heightened presence of dandies and decadents, the homosexuals whose existence threatened male sexuality and power as weak, feminized, and thus, contestable. By remaining within the domestic space, Tosh suggests, middle and upper-class men became quasi-feminized figures whose manliness was no longer asserted on the battle or hunting fields. This domestication of men created figures who were often considered shadows of the manly men that once existed.

In “The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850,” Tosh asserts that analyzing masculinity through the lens of class is the most established approach in which the “grand theme here is the transition from a genteel masculinity grounded in land ownership to a bourgeois masculinity attuned to the market. The new commercial society was made possible by, and in turn reinforced, a new manhood.”²⁵ This transition suggests the waning status of genteel masculinity as their caste was displaced by the rising middle class, and as such, their

²⁴Tosh, 196.

²⁵ John Tosh, “The old Adam and the new man: emerging themes in the history of English masculinities, 1750-1850,” in *English Masculinities, 1660-1800* (London: Longman, 1999), 219.

masculinity was questioned and dismissed. Tosh fails to provide statistics or even anecdotal evidence to confirm this suggestion, and as such, he fails to fully convince readers that the aristocracy's power *was* in decline at this time. Certainly, the aristocracy continued to dominate politically with 74% of the seats in the Commons as late as 1865.²⁶ We certainly cannot ignore the tremendous impact the rising middle class had on both the economic and social structures during this time, however, Tosh's assertion that "manliness embraced moral or cultural as well as physical facets of being a man: courage as well as virility" is not merely limited to the middle class as he suggests.²⁷ In situating the aristocracy on the periphery, Tosh fails to engage with this class as proprietors of manliness, and as such, dismisses a thorough investigation of their waning power for a superficial survey.

In "Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: Britain, 1800-1914," Tosh addresses the impact of women on masculine identity, and as a result, the emerging attraction of empire. Prior to 1800, Tosh suggests that males were considered "ungendered persons"; however, mid-way through the nineteenth-century,

Men had to deal with not only a revival of feminist polemic but also material improvements in the position of women that diminished masculine privilege. The legal reduction of the powers of husbands in the 1870s and 80s, the advances in female education, and the growing independence of young single women (symbolized by the New Woman) all prompted an intensified discourse of sexual difference. Manliness was not redefined as a synonym for the toughest and most exclusive male

²⁶ M. L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 150.

²⁷ Tosh, 231.

attributes. It denied men's emotional vulnerability and reinforced their monopoly on courage and stoicism."²⁸

With the emergence of the New Woman, men's power and position were challenged both legally and socially. This moment forced men to question their role as progenitors and patriarchs as they felt their identities were confronted and impinged upon as women circulated within society alongside of them. In an attempt to escape from the feminization of society many men turned to the empire as a fully masculine place of refuge:

By the late nineteenth century, when men of the middle and upper classes were becoming increasingly restive at the constraints of domesticity, there is considerable evidence for the empire's attraction as a men-only sphere in both popular literature and the individual life histories: it was the bachelor's patrimony [...] The message was clear: the colonies stood for homosocial camaraderie, to be enjoyed either in the imagination, or by going overseas. The appeal of empire to men might be summed up by saying that it represented an unequivocal assertion of masculinity, a place where autonomy could be achieved without constant negotiation with the opposite sex.²⁹

This reference to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's exploration of men as homosocial beings in *Between Men* suggests that men left Britain for foreign lands in an attempt to locate a space in which they could remain patriarchal authorities. In doing so, they chose male companionship over normative female relationships in an effort to salvage their identity and masculinity as absolute. This move confirms the anxiety that men felt at the prospect of socializing with women in ways that could contest their patriarchal sphere of influence.

²⁸ John Tosh, "Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: Britain, 1800-1914," in *Journal of British Study* (No. 44.2, 2005), 337.

²⁹ Tosh, 340.

George Mosse, primarily a German historian, tackles concepts of masculinity in *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*; this book explores the positive stereotypes of manhood (ground in Hellenic ideals of masculine beauty with a set of prescribed virtues) as a motor that drove the nation and society at large, and ultimately never compromised male authority. For my purposes, I would like to turn to his discussion on gender division, which he locates during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Unlike many scholars who recognize the emergence of women as the main culprit in affecting masculine authority and agency, Mosse also cites homosexuals as threatening to masculinity: “The years from the 1870s to the Great War gave new impetus to masculinity and its countertype. The enemies of modern, normative masculinity seemed everywhere on the attack: women were attempting to break out of their traditional role; ‘unmanly’ men and ‘unwomanly’ women were becoming ever more visible. They and the movement for women’s rights threatened that gender division so crucial to the construction of modern masculinity.”³⁰ Mosse’s rhetoric suggests a battle between the sexes, and at times, within the sexes, as men struggled to maintain their normative masculinity. These ‘unmanly’ men and ‘unwomanly’ women are perhaps, for Mosse, the greatest threat and the perpetrator of masculine degeneration:

The ideal of masculinity and what it represented were challenged as part of the decadence not only by sickness but by the increased assertiveness of unmanly men and unwomanly women. From the 1890s onward such ‘degenerates’ provided an ever more visible presence and, however small their number, a continuous challenge to normative masculinity [...] The homosexual scandals at the fin de siècle involving the highest levels of society, such as the Eulenburg affair in Germany or the Cleveland Street

³⁰ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 78.

scandal in England, were taken up greedily by the new mass media. That such scandals involved, above all, members of the aristocracy fueled the fears of the middle classes that decadence had successfully infiltrated the core of government and society.³¹

Despite all of these challenges to normative masculinity, Mosse suggests that homosexuality and androgyny did not erode modern masculinity, but instead, provided a warning that masculinity needed to be seized and reclaimed from degenerates.

Mosse contends that although by the 1870s masculinity was on the defensive, challenges to gender division and power were not so overwhelming as to alter gender relations in any major way. Ultimately, Mosse concludes: “The crisis of masculinity at the fin de siècle had not changed but stiffened the ideal of normative manhood. The Great War was a masculine event, in spite of the role it may have played in encouraging the greater independence of women.”³² For men in the nineteenth century, masculinity was never truly challenged, but remained a stable hegemonic force of authority and power. Furthermore, according to Mosse, normative masculinity was strengthened by the First World War, since modern masculinity symbolized virtue, order, and the hopes and ideals of society. Thus, the manly ideal was difficult to defeat, since, as Mosse suggests, “History cannot so easily be undone.”³³ This continuity implies an unbroken lineage of male supremacy that continued into the twentieth century as the central force in shaping and creating history. Others, then, as they are just that, fail to impact the making of history. For Mosse, modern masculinity did not show signs of erosion until the 1970s and 80s with a heightened homosexual presence and the rampant prevalence of HIV.

³¹ Mosse, 86-91.

³² Mosse, 107.

³³ Ibid., 193.

David Cannadine's work on the aristocracy is tremendous in scope and thoughtful in its presentation as he often explores the historical narrative of the rise and fall of the patrician class, while looking to specific families and lineages. In *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, Cannadine traces the economic and social changes that impacted the landed aristocracy between 1880 to 1976, and the ways in which these changes contributed to their demise. It is clear from his starting date that Cannadine believes this transformation did not begin until towards the end of the nineteenth century. Cannadine cites the sudden and dramatic collapse of the agricultural base of the European economy, partly because of the massive influx of cheap foreign goods from North and South America and the Antipodes, and partly because of the final and emphatic burgeoning of the fully fledged, large-scale, and highly concentrated industrial economy as contributing to the aristocracy's decline.³⁴ Ultimately, agricultural prices and rentals collapsed. As a result, "the whole territorial basis of patrician existence was undermined, and the easy confidences and certainties of the mid-Victorian period vanished for ever."³⁵ Additionally, the passing of the Third Reform Act in 1884-85 "tilted the balance of the constitution more markedly and more irrevocably than ever away from notables to numbers and patrician dominance of the lower house soon vanished for ever as a result."³⁶ What remained was a class no longer fully empowered as their land and money began to diminish along with their position in society. Although Cannadine does not explore the crisis of masculinity, his suggestion that the decline of the British aristocracy

³⁴ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 26.

³⁵ Ibid., 27.

³⁶ Ibid.

did not begin until 1880 remains in line with other scholars' work on this subject in its neglect of mid-century activity.

The aristocracy's crisis of masculinity continues to be a topic without much scholarship. What literature is available repeatedly suggests that British men experienced a crisis of masculinity with the emergence of the New Woman and the *fin de siècle*, without differentiating between the classes. Many of the works mentioned previously do a tremendous job in exploring the economic effects on men's crises of identity and masculinity, an area that is certainly lacking in this particular thesis. In attempting to revise the site of origin for Britain's nineteenth-century crisis of masculinity, locating it first within the aristocracy at mid-century, a direct refutation of Tosh and Cannadine's claims, I hope to successfully suggest that for the aristocracy, their crisis of masculinity occurred long before the *fin de siècle* due to their incompetent participation in the Crimean War, involvement with divorce proceedings, and representation in sensation fiction. In turning to the journal and letters of General Lord George Paget, the narratives, letters, and editorials concerning both the Ellenborough and Lincoln divorce cases, and Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's sensational antiheroes, I hope to reveal the tenuous and fragile nature of aristocratic men's masculinity as it was questioned, challenged, and, at times, condemned long before the end of the century.

CHAPTER TWO

The Crime of the Crimea: The Origin of the Aristocracy's Crisis of Masculinity



MAP 21.7 The Crimean War

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The origin of the Crimean War stems, like many conflicts, from the desire for power, access, and authority. Taking place from 1854 to 1856, the Crimean War involved the Russian Empire fighting against the Ottoman Empire, Britain, and France in an effort to gain control over the Black Sea, since “if Russia was to survive as a world power, unimpeded entry to the Mediterranean was vital.”³⁷ Although this conflict was only one of many that occurred between the Russian and Ottoman Empires throughout the Russo-Turkish Wars, it was significant in that the Ottoman Empire gained allies in Britain and France. Since both France and Britain viewed the Ottoman Empire as weak, they feared

³⁷ Christine Kelly, *Mrs. Duberly's War: Journal and Letters from the Crimea, 1854-6* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 327.

that Russian control over Ottoman land would result in a tremendous growth of power for Russia, ultimately threatening France and Britain's colonial interests in Asia. Both nations hoped that with victory, they could influence political and imperial issues for their own gain.

Although greatly unprepared, Britain declared war on Russia on March 28, 1854, and dispatched troops to the Crimea. They expected the war to last a mere twelve weeks: "The French and the British allied forces besieged the fortified city of Sebastopol on the Crimean Peninsula in September, 1854. They hoped for a short siege, but Russians had sunk ships to protect their harbor and taken aggressive measures for defense."³⁸ Facing a tougher opponent than expected, months elapsed and winter presented grave challenges to the allied forces, particularly Britain, as food, clothes, and medical supplies were often scarce. As Lord George Paget explains in his journal, which I will turn to shortly, Britain's time in the Crimea was characterized by ill-preparation and miscommunication, resulting in tremendous casualties. Despite these weaknesses, the Allied forces ultimately won the Crimean War:

On February 28, 1856, an Armistice was signed in Paris and the next day Russian and Allied officers met to celebrate peace. A month later the British commander invited Russian officers to a race meeting near the Tchernaya river. The Treaty of Paris, signed on March 30, 1856, was finally ratified on April 27th. The Allies agreed to withdraw from the Crimea and give up both Kertch and Kinburn; the Danube was to be an open waterway; and the principalities were to be free from interference in their internal affairs. Finally, the Black Sea was partially neutralised; it was closed to large warships of every nationality and there were to be no naval bases on its shores. (This condition was renounced by Russia only fourteen years later.) it was not a total victory; the Russians could still operate their Baltic fleet and their naval ambitions were only briefly

³⁸ Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 21.

checked. The demilitarisation of the Black Sea was unilaterally abrogated in 1870. For the British, the major benefit of the Crimean War was the long overdue reform of the army.³⁹

At home, there was little celebration. The actions of the officers, mostly comprised of aristocratic men, were met with disdain by the British public. In turning to the journals and letters of General Lord George Paget, newspaper articles, and satirical cartoons, I will explore the disintegration of favorable public opinion concerning aristocratic involvement in the Crimean War, and in doing so, will illustrate the Crimean War as the origin of the aristocracy's crisis of masculinity in Britain.

General Lord George Augustus Frederick Paget was born on March 16, 1818, in England; he was the sixth son of Henry William Paget, first Marquis of Anglesey. Paget served as a Member of Parliament between 1847 and 1857. On June 20, 1854, Paget left for the Crimea as a Brevet Colonel in command of the 4th Light Dragoons. He fought at the battles of Alma and Balaklava; additionally, he was the next senior officer of the light cavalry brigade to Lord Cardigan during the event famously memorialized by Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade." In an effort to document his time in the Crimea, Lord George kept a journal that upon his death was published by his daughter, Cecil Stratford Paget. Beginning on July 19, 1854, almost a month after his initial departure, Lord George received the order for embarkation to join the army under Lord Raglan's division, which had preceded the 4th Light Dragoons by a few weeks. On July 29th, their ship, *Simla*, arrived at the mouth of the Dardanelles.⁴⁰

³⁹ Christine Kelly, 201-02.

⁴⁰ General Lord George Paget, *The Light Cavalry Brigade in the Crimea* (Yorkshire, EP Publishing Limited, 1975), 3.

Describing life on board a ship, Lord George writes: “It is a monotonous life indeed, broken in upon only by our five meals a day, and the excitement from time to time of getting our camp kits on deck, and comparing notes on them by the ‘convicts,’ for such we all look with our closely cropped beards. On passing Gallipoli the first visible signs of the war meet our view—a French encampment, which filled the cornets with military ardour.”⁴¹ Life onboard was not easy for the men, especially aristocratic men, who were accustomed to moving as they pleased and consuming much of what they desired. The monotony of routine wore on the men, especially as sickness infiltrated their ship. On August 2, 1854, Paget recalls that everyone seemed to long for an expedition anywhere, “to get out of this foetid [*sic*] hole of cholera and disease.”⁴² He also notes, “The misery of this place exceeds belief. No one is allowed to move without swords, even for bathing, for fear of the Greeks.”⁴³ This foreign land represented all that is uncivilized as this space embodies sickness and misery; for Paget, he is bound by duty to fulfill his military mission, however, he recognizes the difficulties that lie ahead: “At dinner last night at Lord Raglan’s they were in good spirits about the expedition, but with our present state of sickness, consider it a very grave undertaking, especially with our ill-developed commissariat.”⁴⁴ Concern over food and supplies is present from the beginning as a threat to their success and well-being.

After some time in the Crimea, Paget tries to settle into life at war. He, however, is out of place as he struggles to deal with the heat and bugs. “The flies and ants are our

⁴¹ Paget, 4.

⁴² Ibid., 5.

⁴³ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

chief enemies here. My letter has just blown out of my tent, and I have had a race for it, much resembling that of Pickwick after his hat.”⁴⁵ Charles Dickens writes in *The Pickwick Papers* on chasing one’s hat: “There are very few moments in a man’s existence when he experiences so much ludicrous distress, or meets with so little charitable commiseration, as when he is in pursuit of his own hat.”⁴⁶ This reference suggests, like Pickwick chasing his hat, that Paget is awkward, distressed, and unnatural in this environment. As he chases his letter that tumbles over foreign land, Paget is an attraction to be watched and scrutinized as an alien presence in this unfamiliar environment.



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Two months after disembarking from the *Simla*, on September 20th, Lord George and his 4th division engage in their first battle. “At 12 o’clock we mounted, and on

⁴⁵ Paget, 8.

⁴⁶ Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1976), 53.

⁴⁷ Robert Seymour, “Mr. Pickwick in Chase of His Hat,” 1836, accessed 27 March 2013. <Victorianweb.org>

coming over the crest of the hill, which I described as being in our front, there burst on our view the Russian army in position on the heights overhanging the plain in our front, at the base of which runs the River Alma, about three miles from where we first came in sight of them.”⁴⁸ Paget compares his position to an opera box, in which he is able to see the whole of the impending battle. On the battle, Paget writes: “Up go the Turks and French, and about the same time out go our skirmishers, and then commences the ‘pop, pop.’ At 1.40 P.M. the action commences, and is over at 4 P.M.; to describe the grandeur of it would not be an easy task.”⁴⁹ As they watch the Russians retreat, General Cathcart tells Lord George: “Ah! Those fellows have had such a dressing, that they will never meet us in the open again.”⁵⁰ This moment is both overwhelming and exhilarating for Lord George, who admits in his journal that his account of the battle may be exaggerated, “but allowance must be made for a fellow who has seen the thing for the first time.”⁵¹ The moaning of the wounded provide the soundtrack as Lord George contemplates his participation in this battle and writes in horror on the reality of death. Paget is shocked by the casualties and must adjust his aristocratic worldview with this new one that is comprised of hunger, wounds, and far too many fatalities.

As commander of the 4th Light Dragoons, Lord George is often given contradictory orders. He tells one story of how he was ordered different assignments by General Cathcart and Lord Lucan, and unsure of whom to follow, he simply changed his course as often as he was told. On this situation, Paget writes: “I give you an account of

⁴⁸ Paget, 22.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁵¹ Ibid., 25.

this little episode to show what an anomalous position I am in—tossed about by the waves, not knowing what division I belong, or whom to obey, for it is a positive though curious fact, that up to this moment I have never received one single authorised order through a regular channel since I landed in the Crimea.”⁵² For Paget, he is a liminal space of confusion in which his position and authority is never stable, but always tenuous, always changing with the drastic and sudden needs of war. This position confirms the lack of structured communication from the war office, and further suggests the disorganization of Britain’s involvement in the Crimea. John Tosh’s claim that “only at times of popular alarm about the nation’s military readiness, like the 1850s and 60s, and the first decade of the twentieth century, did vestiges of aristocratic manliness reappear in the mainstream” seems completely refuted by Paget’s anxiety over the organization and communication of Britain’s military.⁵³

On the evening of October 25, 1854, Paget recalls the day’s events in which the Russians attacked at 6 A.M. at Balaclava. On their initial meeting with the Russians, Paget writes:

They [Russians] then, about 11 A.M. came across the plain to us, right up to Balaclava, and attacked our heavy brigade, who, with us, had in the meantime retreated behind our lines. The heavy brigade charged them beautifully and routed them, on which they retired to the heights they had taken from the Turks. Things thus remained for about an hour, when the Light Brigade advanced down a valley, in rear of the position we had lost. We rode at a fast trot for nearly two miles without support, flanked by a murderous fire from the hills on each side. Well, at last we got up to their

⁵² Paget, 44.

⁵³ John Tosh, “What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain,” in *History Workshop* (No. 38, 1994), 182.

guns and cavalry, and took the former (nine, I counted), sabred some of the drivers, and, to our horror, then found that we were not supported!⁵⁴

Paget's account of the Battle of Balaclava paints a picture of chaos as he and Cardigan lead their men into a battle for which they are little prepared. Like Tennyson's famous memorial of the event, Paget, too, celebrates the heroism of Britain's brave men: "Oh, how nobly the fellows behaved! At one time were between four fires, or rather four attacks—right and left, front and rear; and during all this time the fellows kept cheering! The 13th suffered the most, the 4th the next. Alas! Alas! It was a sad business, and all without result, or rather with the result of the destruction of the Light Brigade. It will be the cause of much ill-blood and accusation, I promise you."⁵⁵ The divisions endure great loss (148 men killed, 291 men wounded, and 379 horses wounded or killed according to Paget), and leadership recognizes their actions as culpable for the day's events. "Lucan is much cut up; and with tears in his eyes this morning he said how infamous it was to lay the blame on him, and told me what had passed between him and Lord Raglan. The fact is, we can fight better than any other nation, but we have no organisation. I have always anticipated a disaster when the cavalry came to be engaged, though I kept it to myself [...] It was not a pleasant morning to, seeing all our outworks (Turkish) abandoned, and no support coming up from behind. Many an anxious look did I give to those hills."⁵⁶ On October 27th, Paget acknowledges that Britain will give up Balaclava. Imagining the newspaper headlines as "Annihilation of the Light Cavalry Brigade," he expresses dread over such news back home, since, as he acknowledges in his journal, Britain has failed to

⁵⁴ Paget, 68-9.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 71-2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 73-4.

mobilize the proper supplies and guidance. Lucan's tears, too, symbolize the failure of British leadership to protect their fellow men and illustrate the humiliation and frustration that arises from such a condition. These moments embody the aristocracy's emerging crisis of masculinity as they are forced to address and acknowledge resulting casualties as a consequence of their incompetency.

As October comes to a close, Paget expresses grievous concern over the cold. "It has become so cold, with a piercing north wind. The thing I find most difficult in keeping warm at night is my *nose*, and I fear it will affect its beauty."⁵⁷ This concern over his beauty illustrates Paget's position as a gentleman and the ways in which he is more concerned with his looks, and how they will affect his identity as a man and individual, than he is with leading and caring for his troops. Another battle on November 5, 1854, results in a "complete victory," although eight generals perish. "A more sanguinary day than the Alma." That evening, while smoking a cigar with the Duke of Cambridge in his tent, Paget witnesses a wounded colonel carried away. Seeing the reality of war, he thinks: "Oh war! War! How one has heard and read of it without realising all its horrors!"⁵⁸ On November 7, 1854, Paget goes to headquarters to check in with the Council of War and requests leave to go home, with the purpose of retiring from the service. On November 9th, Lord Raglan agrees that Lord George Paget may depart the Crimea for the purpose of retiring.⁵⁹ All that he has seen and endured has convinced

⁵⁷ Paget, 79.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 83.

Paget that his time in the Crimea has come to its conclusion; as an aristocratic man, he has the privilege to do so, and thus, leaves the war behind.

Upon his return to Britain, Lord Paget is met with criticism for departure from the Crimea. One anonymous citizen wrote to the editor of *The Times* on December 7, 1854: "A month ago Lord George was in the Crimea. He behaved like a gallant soldier at the battles of Alma and Balaklava, but his name is not mentioned in the lists of the wounded. While other officers remain firmly at their posts in spite of ill health, and, in many instances, of serious wounds, Lord George Paget *prefers* returning to England."⁶⁰ The latent suggestion present in the letter situates Paget as less than a man for leaving the Crimea simply because he preferred life at home in England. He is not recognized, therefore, as a hero, but instead as a deserter. Alfred Paget, George's brother, comes to his defense when he, too, wrote to the editor of *The Times* to clear his brother's name:

It is not true, as you state, that my brother was prevented from leaving the army in consequence of a quarrel with a brother officer. It had always been his intention to quit the service upon his marriage; but, as the war broke out about that time, he thought it possible that his regiment might be reelected for foreign service, and he, therefore, determined not to retire until he had had an opportunity of distinguishing himself, and of showing that he was not unworthy to bear a name which hitherto has never been associated by the people of this country with cowardice."⁶¹

Lord George's journal reveals that he did intend to quit the service before the outbreak of the Crimean War since his father had died and he was newly married.⁶² Despite these conditions, he did, as we know, fight in two of the most significant battles, Alma and Balaklava, but according to the public, his valor was replaced with cowardice upon his

⁶⁰ Anonymous, "Editorial," *The Times*, December 7, 1854.

⁶¹ Alfred Paget, "Editorial," *The Times*, November, 7 1855.

⁶² Paget, 255.

return to Britain. This homecoming marks the crystallization of Paget's crisis of masculinity as he is forced to accept and react to the public's antagonistic criticism of him as an officer and man.

Paget's diminished public reputation ultimately caused him great distress. On February 23, 1855, Lord George Paget, feeling unappreciated and wrongfully accused, returned to the Crimea. Upon his departure, his brother, Clarence, remarked: "And it was one of those who rode down that valley of death, was it, that was driven ignominiously from his country!"⁶³ His journal at this time reflects a man hostile towards his fellow countrymen and angry that his decision to return home was not honored and celebrated: "This is the history of my coming home, and of my return to the Crimea immediately afterwards, leaving in England very many officers of all ranks, who were permitted to do what I was not, though none of them with the plea that I had."⁶⁴ Despite his tremendous service, it is clear that the British public held no sympathy for an aristocratic man who left duty before the war's conclusion simply because, they felt, he could. News reports often depicted, and rightfully so, the disorganization of the officers and the military high command. On February 3, 1855, an unnamed war correspondent for *The Times* wrote:

I need scarcely describe to you how different the state is in the English army. The English army, famous for its discipline, is now, as far as organization goes, like a rabble. It would be difficult to say in which department there is the greatest disorder. From the Quartermaster-General's office down to the last commissariat clerk it is one mass of confusion. The idea of responsibility seems to have entirely vanished; the grossest errors are daily committed, and no one is blamed, because every one is working on his own hook, without any firm energetic arm to direct the isolated efforts to one end. Lord Raglan sends his orders, if he does

⁶³ Paget, 261.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 259.

send any, and supposes that they are executed. I tell you that since he left Balaklava he never once went there to convince himself by his own eyes how things were going on. And things are going on there in such a way that Balaklava has become a byword for everything bad, dirty, stupid, and absurd. And not without reason.⁶⁵

This criticism reinforces the negative views on the war continually perpetuated through newspaper outlets. With little other evidence, the British public felt outrage, particularly directed towards the aristocratic officers who allowed such neglect to take place. At home, during these many newspaper attacks, Lord George Paget became the symbol of all that was wrong with the British army in Crimea.

Writing on the “British Attack on the Redan,” published October 2, 1855, in *The Times*, another war correspondent remarks: “Had things [at Redan] gone off well, of course more regiments would have gained *éclat*, and the army would have been proportionately gratified. Unfortunately, things went ill, and the result was officers without men to obey them and men without officers to lead them; and hence confusion, clamour, disobedience, and finally, destruction.”⁶⁶ Again, we see rhetoric that censures and condemns the actions of the officers as they are recognized as inefficient and ineffective leaders. The press’s power to affect public opinion was an influential force in the condemnation of the aristocracy for their role in the Crimean War:

Reports from the Crimea had not only included eyewitness accounts of the realities of combat, but had also drawn public attention to the poor living conditions and ill-health of the soldiers, especially during the winter of 1854-55, and exposed the logistical weaknesses and strategic errors of the British campaign. The presence of ‘negative’ motifs of this kind undercut heroism with an ironic discourse of human errors and suffering. Swinging attacks on the aristocratic generals’ incompetence helped to transform the

⁶⁵ Anonymous, “Update on the Crimea,” *The Times*, February 3, 1855.

⁶⁶ Anonymous, “British Attacks on the Redan,” *The Times*, October 2, 1855.

initial popular excitement and support for the 'Crimean adventure' into public anger and concern that eventually brought down the Government.⁶⁷

The consequences of the aristocratic officers' actions, and the revelation of such within public discourse, contributed to a defunct, and ultimately dismissed, government that was incapable of cultivating public affection or respect.

On the battlefield, Paget, too, writes of his own army's inefficiency, particularly concerning food and supplies: "We continually have to borrow from the French, and there are little able to help us, but D'Allonville is such a good fellow, he continually tells me that he considers us all as one, and that he is bound to look after our interests as much as his own troops. But it is rather humiliating that the great maritime power of the world cannot furnish a tug for such an emergency."⁶⁸ For Paget, the months of waiting in a desolate and foreign country without supplies is not nearly as bad as the lack of communication from his superiors: "It is more than a fortnight since I sent a list of the sick officers, recommended by the doctors to go away and no answer yet. I take all this rather to heart." Paget compares his regiment to Robinson Crusoe, isolated and ultimately alone, their division fragmented and disconnected from the War Correspondent's office. When a reply does come, in the form of a bag filled only with supplies, Paget remarks, "that such a dispatch-bag should have thus arrived after a month's silence—a void, a blank, a delusion and a snare—is certainly the poetry of disappointment."⁶⁹ This language

⁶⁷ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 95.

⁶⁸ Paget, 144.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 138.

laments the divide between the government officials and those on the ground engaged in war, and ultimately reveals Paget's discontent and disillusionment.



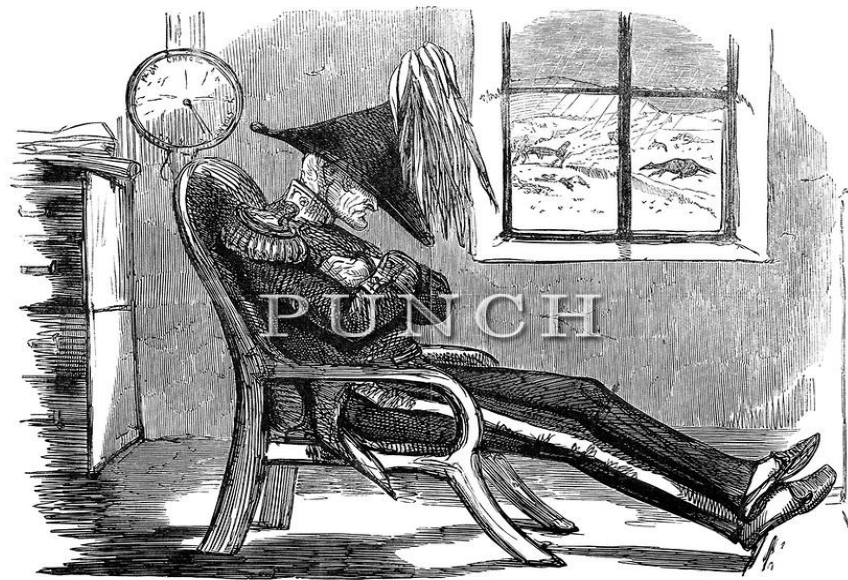
THE QUEEN VISITING THE IMBECILES OF THE CRIMEA.

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Like editorials and war correspondents' reports to *The Times*, *Punch* magazine also portrayed the inefficiency of Britain's government in the Crimea. This cartoon, "The Queen Visiting the Imbeciles of the Crimea," illustrates the inefficiency present from disorganized factions. The Queen, with her guard close behind, assesses the Commissariat first: this figure, in charge of the men's supplies, is depicted with a turnip head, a food the soldiers were certainly far too familiar with, a barrel of unroasted and bitter green coffee as its body, and bare shelves void of necessities for the thighs and feet. This illustration symbolizes the failure of the Commissariat to procure not only enough

⁷⁰ John Leech, "The Queen Visiting the Imbeciles of the Crimea," 14 April 1855, accessed 13 January 2013. <punch.photoshelter.com>

goods, but fresh and edible food for the men fighting on behalf of Britain. On the far left, the Medical Department stands with the aid of crutches; he is bandaged haphazardly and wears glasses that do not properly fit. Additionally, his feet are wrapped in such a way that any movement at all is surely difficult. In between the Medical and Commissariat Departments is the “Routine,” representing additional departments, particularly officers, present in the Crimea. This figure, wearing an officer’s hat, is portrayed as swine, as less than human, an animal who promenades as a gentleman. Ultimately, the Queen looks with disdain at the sorry lot of “imbeciles” before her. Through this cartoon, though satirical in nature, the artist reflects and represents public opinion; as such, it is apparent that the British public exhibited very little confidence in their armed forces to provide and protect its soldiers.



THE GENERAL FAST (ASLEEP). HUMILIATING—VERY !

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⁷¹ John Leech, “The General Fast (Asleep),” 24 March 1855, accessed 13 January 2013. <punch.photoshelter.com>

A second *Punch* cartoon presents a general fast asleep in a grand high-backed chair, a little after four o'clock in the afternoon. He is in full uniform, epaulettes large and visible, feet covered in refined slip-ons, his hat revealing his prominent nose and chin. He is oblivious to the needs of his men as he resides in a warm and comfortable room. Although the caption suggests that this is a humiliating predicament for the general, he seems unaffected by his neglect as he contentedly snoozes the afternoon away. This sketch ultimately criticizes the treatment with which aristocratic officers handled the Crimean War as it was characterized by indifference, neglect, and apathy. Such cartoons as these further convinced the British public that their military divisions were not worthy of their respect or adoration, specifically the aristocratic officers who were most often depicted as incompetent and inefficient as illustrated above. Though not fully crystallized at this time, the aristocracy's crisis of masculinity begins here, as their manliness was questioned and their authority challenged. General Lord George Paget's own journal recounts the tremendous neglect and disorganization present in the Crimea, while newspaper editorials and articles, in addition to satirical cartoons, illustrate the British public's dissatisfaction and disappointment in the aristocratic officers to protect their brave boys and bring them home.

Chapter 3

Divorce in the Court: The Public Shame of Lord Ellenborough and Lord Lincoln



AN "UGLY RUSH!"

MR. BULL. "NOT IF I KNOW IT!"

[See Division on the Woman's Vote Bill.

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In 1870, the first Women's Vote Bill came before Parliament; after its defeat, suffrage organizations were created with the hope of earning equal voting rights among men and women. Although women were not granted the right to vote in Britain until 1918, there is a long legacy of suffragettes and reformers as evidenced by the *Punch* cartoon above. The "ugly rush" is comprised of women, many well clothed in their satin dresses with large bowed detail on the back. They are mostly older women, those who understand the privileges equal rights would grant them. They bang on a door, hands full of bills for movement toward female equality, in which Mr. John Bull, the personification of national identity for England (similar to Uncle Sam in the United States), stands firmly

⁷² "An Ugly Rush," 28 May 1870, accessed 13 January 2013. <punch.photoshelter.com>

with his back to the ladies in an effort to block and stagnate their political desires. Bull represents a bullish figure who will not allow the ugly rush to infiltrate and alter the patriarchal society which has endured. The women are determined, however, as they crowd the door, indifferent to the stares that they receive from women and children in the street.

Even before the women's suffrage movement evolved, legislative acts began to address the lack of women's rights as evidenced by the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857. While marriage was recognized as the ultimate and desired fate for women of this time, it should be noted that once married, women existed as dependents of their husbands under the coverture laws present in England at this time. Under the laws of coverture, a woman was "covered," or protected, first by her father, and then by her husband. These laws provided no legal or political rights to women, so much so that even the children she bore lawfully belonged to her husband. According to Tory politician, Sir William Blackstone: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being, or legal existence of a woman is suspended during marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything."⁷³ This legal construction confirms the anxiety of the patriarchy to possess the female subject and maintain authority within the public sphere. The woman, then, was always a hidden person whose identity was never truly her own since she ceased to exist as a person under the law. Naturally, not every marriage was a happy union. On divorce at this time, Mary Lyndon Shanley explains in *Feminism*,

⁷³ Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, 1989), 1-2.

Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895: “Except for a brief period under the Commonwealth (1649-1660), England had no provision for civil divorce other than the extraordinary procedure of a private act of Parliament. By the nineteenth century some ten private acts for divorce passed Parliament each year. Divorce was seen as a punitive measure against an adulterous wife, and a way for a man to assure himself of legitimate offspring.”⁷⁴ Divorces, therefore, were very expensive and required association with Parliament; when they did occur, it was certainly a privilege of the aristocracy who had the means and connections to orchestrate such a rare event. Although the Divorce Bill was proposed in June 1854, “no parliamentary consideration of the divorce bill took place during 1854 to 1855, because Lord Aberdeen’s government collapsed that year over charges of mismanagement of the Crimean War.”⁷⁵ The House of Lords debated the terms of this act for some time, until it came to be enacted on January 1, 1858.

This chapter interrogates two divorce cases—Lady Jane Digby and Lord Ellenborough’s divorce in 1830 and Lady Susan and Lord Lincoln’s divorce in 1850—in an effort to explore the ways in which aristocratic women, before the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act, reacted against their covered identities in hopes of securing freedom and movement from their marriages. Consequently, and more importantly for my purposes, these women’s actions pushed their husbands into crises of masculinity as they became fodder for gossip in which their roles as protectors and patriarchs were questioned, and at times, condemned. Ultimately, these divorce cases illustrate the

⁷⁴ Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 36.

⁷⁵ Shanley, 38.

waning power and authority of aristocratic men to maintain a hegemonic position over their wives as evidenced by journals, letters, and newspaper editorials and articles. Ultimately, the passing of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act further reduced men's power over women as female legal rights were heightened under the law.

Lady Jane Digby's life is a scandalous tale full of affairs. Born in Dorset, England, on April 3, 1807, to Admiral Henry Digby and Lady Jane Cook Digby, Jane lived an idyllic childhood attending school, caring for her animals, and playing with her brothers and cousins.⁷⁶ On September 15, 1824, just five months after meeting, Jane wed Lord Edward Ellenborough, a childless widower who was seventeen years her senior.⁷⁷ Lord Ellenborough met Jane years before when she was only twelve years old when he had sided with her grandfather, Thomas Coke, in opposing King George IV's wish for divorce. This would remain an ironic twist upon Lord Ellenborough's petition for divorce from Jane in 1830. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, Ellenborough, at the insistence of his father, entered the world of politics and rose quickly in distinction. He and Jane's union was surprising to many due to their vast age difference.

That Jane chose to marry Lord Ellenborough when she might have chosen a bridegroom nearer her own age is surprising. Previous biographers have speculated that Jane was compelled to marry Ellenborough by her parents, but there is no evidence to substantiate this. It seems far more likely that she was flattered by the attentions of an older, experienced man and that she romantically concluded that she was in love with him.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Mary S. Lovell, *A Scandalous Life: The Jane Digby Biography* (London: Fourth Estate Publishing, 2003), 14.

⁷⁷ Lovell, 17.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

Their marriage would last only six years, and their love affair much less, before their union was publicly ended by Parliament.

As a member of Parliament, Ellenborough spent much time away to attend debates and political activity required of him; additionally, Jane's insecurity that her husband loved his deceased wife far more than her, left the couple in a state of demise. "Jane, feeling rejected by her husband's frequent absences and hurt by his apparent coolness, attributed the neglect not to his work but to his love for the dead Octavia."⁷⁹ Life as Lady Ellenborough was not easy despite her admirable jewels and "pin-money"; more than these things, Jane desired the company of her husband. Six months into their marriage, Jane discovered the Lord Ellenborough had a mistress whose portrait hung in their home. Despite a season of balls and time spent in Paris and Brighton, the couple was falling apart. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jane began to notice other men.

George Anson, Jane's older cousin, had been a hero of sorts for her since he fought in the Battle of Waterloo and afterwards became a member of Parliament. Jane worshipped him from childhood, but nothing romantic ever occurred. In the summer of 1826, however, things changed when an affair developed. Jane basked in their union, writing: "Oh it is heaven to love thee and rapture to be near thee."⁸⁰ Soon after, Lady Ellenborough engaged in a second affair with Frederick Madden, an academic who specialized in ancient manuscripts while both were visiting her grandfather's house, Holkham.⁸¹ Despite their tryst, they never met again. Meanwhile, Jane's affair with

⁷⁹ Lovell, 31.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁸¹ Ibid., 36.

George Anson was in trouble since both realized the relationship was doomed: "Marriage to Jane was out of the question. The average divorce-rate was two a year at that date, and the publicity and expense surrounding such a course was usually sufficient to ruin the applicants and their families, socially as well as economically. A divorce would have finished George's career in the army, and both cousins would have been aware that the closely linked Anson, Coke, and Digby families would never countenance their union."⁸² As such, at George's insistence, the couple parted ways, although for Jane, she was quite devastated since she believed him to be the true love of her life.

Although George and Jane parted ways, she discovered only weeks afterwards that she was pregnant, not with her husband's child, but with George Anson's. A son, Arthur Dudley, was born on February 15, 1828, and Lord Ellenborough, who had longed for a son, was elated, ignorant of the child's true biological father. At the same time, Ellenborough was appointed a Cabinet post as Lord Privy Seal in Wellington's new government, and as such, he was more preoccupied than ever.⁸³ Despite Jane's loving care of her animals as a girl, she was not a warm mother. As an aristocratic woman, her baby was raised by a wetnurse and nursemaid so that she could resume her position in society. "Despite her glowing appearance, Jane was deeply unhappy. Edward was tolerant but remote, and her relationship with her child was conducted at arm's length. She pined, according to her poetry, for the days of love and laughter, and the 'magic' she had shared with George."⁸⁴ Shortly after her twenty-first birthday, and three months after

⁸² Lovell, 40.

⁸³ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 47.

her son's birth, Jane attended a ball at the Austrian embassy where she met Prince Felix Schwarzenberg of Austria, resulting in a moment that would change her life forever.

Prince Felix, the fourth son of one of the great aristocratic families of Europe, was the attaché and secretary to Prince Esterhazy when he met Jane. According to Prince Felix's biographer, "It was love at first sight in the Byron style."⁸⁵ Unlike her previous affairs, it was Prince Felix that pursued Jane—sending flowers, poems, and notes—in hopes of winning her affection.

To find herself so courted and so desired after her lover's seemingly callous desertion and her husband's indifference was balm to Jane's wounded spirit. Despite initial discretion it was quickly apparent to interested members of society that Lady Ellenborough had exchanged her regular escort, Colonel Anson, for the handsome foreign prince. It suited Jane's hurt pride that society assumed the change was by her own choice.⁸⁶

At the same time, Lord Ellenborough engaged in two extramarital affairs, one with the Countess St. Antonio and the other with a very pretty girl, the daughter of a pastry cook, referred to as the "confectioner's daughter" in *The Times*.⁸⁷ These affairs confirmed the demise of their marriage in which husband and wife were living separate lives.

Prince Felix and Jane's happy courtship resulted in pregnancy, during which, Lord Ellenborough was made aware of their affair. Realizing the damage this could do to his career, Prince Felix packed his things for a transfer to the Paris embassy. "On May 11, 1829, Felix left for Europe, telling Jane he had no alternative but to accept his new posting and suggesting that, since she could not confess her pregnancy, she should

⁸⁵ Lovell, 50.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 53.

attempt to obtain Ellenborough's permission to go abroad to be confined in secret."⁸⁸

Lord Ellenborough rejected this proposal, although during their conversation, he suggested that they formally separate so that they both could go their own ways.

Ellenborough assured Jane that he would provide for her future needs as long as she left their son, Arthur, in his custody.⁸⁹ Although Jane happily accepted, her family prevented her from reuniting with Felix. On the Ellenborough's situation, Mrs. Arbuthnot, a close companion of the Duke of Wellington's and frequent guest of the Ellenboroughs wrote: "There has been an explosion in the house of Lord Ellenborough. He has found out all or at least a part of the improprieties of her conduct. Her lover, Prince Schwarzenberg, is gone back to Austria and, at just the same time, Lord Ellenborough took her to her father and refused to live with her any longer. She has been boasting of her own infamy and ridiculing Lord Ellenborough's blindness."⁹⁰ Lord Ellenborough's position as a man of masculine authority was immediately compromised with the revelation of his wife's affair and pregnancy. His name, often on the lips of his peers, and prominent in the newspapers, became representative of a man who could not sexually maintain his wife nor control her actions. Ultimately, his reputation was in jeopardy and his identity as a masculine being was challenged.

Since Jane's secret affair with Prince Felix was revealed, Ellenborough, at the recommendation of his brothers and cousin, contacted a solicitor alleging infidelity by his wife. The solicitor felt that although this was damaging to Lord Ellenborough's public

⁸⁸ Lovell, 54.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 63.

reputation, there was not enough evidence to warrant an investigation.⁹¹ Jane's husband hired a private investigator who discovered the extensive duration and frequency of Jane and Prince Felix's visits, and once it was confirmed that Jane left London for the Continent to be with Felix and bear his child, "Ellenborough's original plan of a formal separation was dropped in favour of his seeking a legal divorce."⁹² Ironically, as hinted at earlier, this is the man who had once alienated the King by expressing disapproval when George IV attempted to divorce Caroline of Brunswick. Not only was Lord Ellenborough attacked in the press for this action years before, but he was also criticized by many as either lacking sexual ability, or, alternatively, condemned for his own licentious behavior. One correspondent remarked: "Ellenborough's divorce is going on—so we shall soon know, I hope, whether he is as Lady Holland says, impotent, or as others say given to bad women and blessed with a family of natural children."⁹³ In the wake of his divorce scandal, Ellenborough's reputation and his manhood became fodder for gossip at the same time that his crisis of masculinity crystallized.

Meanwhile, Jane gave birth to her and Felix's daughter, named Mathilde, and not long after, her first child, Arthur, perished from a convulsive fit. Flooded with grief, Lord Ellenborough composed a poem in reflection on his son: "Poor child! Thy mother never smiled on thee/ Nor stayed to soothe thee in thy suffering day!/ But thou wert all the world to me,/ The solace of my solitary way."⁹⁴ Ellenborough's grief, coupled with his concern over the divorce proceedings (under prevailing laws, a divorce could not be

⁹¹ Lovell, 66.

⁹² Ibid., 70.

⁹³ Ibid., 72.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 175.

granted if both he and Jane were found equally guilty of adultery), provided a stressful time for him as he sought to maintain his normal life and looked to the hope of remarrying. On March 9, 1830, the Ellenborough divorce trial began, although Jane was not present to defend her role as adulteress. Word-for-word transcripts were printed in *The Times* both sully Lady and Lord Ellenborough's reputations. Although most of Lord Ellenborough's colleagues favored his divorce, a few, such as Lord Radnor, did not. One such monologue appeared in *The Times* on March 18, 1830:

Every husband owes his wife protection. Even if he despairs of gaining her personal attachment, he owes her protection from the foulness of sin, the scorn of the world, and the future pangs of remorse. Above all, he owes her protection from the contagion of bad example, particularly in himself: and if Lord Ellenborough has not afforded such protection to his wife, it were a wicked act of legislation to give him relief by dissolving the marriage tie. We hope this bill will be more thoroughly investigated in the Commons. If both houses of parliament choose to pass divorce bills without instituting inquiries of their own, resting content with mere evidence offered by those who are interested in the success of the bills, it were better that the reverence for a marriage as a sacred rite should perish altogether, and that parties should be allowed to go before a magistrate and declare their union dissolved at will.⁹⁵

This reaction certainly hints at Lord Ellenborough's own extramarital indiscretions, while also questioning his role as a husband and protector. This move situates Ellenborough as not fully masculine for his inability to guide and protect his wife from the contagion of bad example.

The Age, one of London's cheaper papers wrote to Lord Ellenborough: "You have been an adulteress yourself, you have seduced and intrigued with females, more than one or two in humble life, one of whom has a child of which you are the father, and whom

⁹⁵ *The Times*, 18 March 1830, accessed 27 March 2013.

you refused to aid in her poverty and misery until fear of exposure tempted you to grant her a pittance.”⁹⁶ Despite these attacks in the press, the Ellenborough Divorce Bill was passed on April 7, 1830. “Given the weight of evidence against Jane, one might have expected *some* sympathy for Ellenborough. After all, he was the proven injured party and had recently been bereaved of his only son and heir. However, virtually no one believed that he had not behaved badly himself on the two counts of adulterous behavior and neglect of Jane.”⁹⁷ As news of the Ellenborough affairs circulated, most people often sided with Jane suggesting that she—as the angel of the house—was neglected and thus led astray by little fault of her own. The rhetoric surrounding the trial implies that Ellenborough’s failure to *protect* his wife led to her adulterous behavior, and, ultimately, then, to the demise of their marriage. Writing on R. W. Connell’s conception of hegemonic masculinity, Tosh asserts: “Hegemonic masculinity denotes those masculine attributes which serve to sustain men’s power over women in society; and a vital measure of their success is that they elicit support and conformity regardless of economic or political status [...] From this perspective, the dominant forms of masculinity are those which marshal men with very different interests behind the defence of patriarchy.”⁹⁸ In contesting and challenging Ellenborough’s masculine identity, hegemonic masculinity as a prevailing gender practice was challenged, and thus, in decline.

⁹⁶ Lovell, 88.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁸ John Tosh, “The old Adam and the new man: emerging themes in the history of English masculinities, 1750-1850,” in *English Masculinities, 1660-1800*, eds. Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen (London: Longman, 1999), 225.

Although access to Lord Ellenborough's journals was not a possibility during this time, I contend that he felt moments of crisis, during which he questioned his role as a patriarch and his ability to not only be a good husband, but also a good man. Ultimately, Ellenborough never married again. Professionally, he was a successful Governor-General of India, although personally he never recovered, and ultimately died without a legitimate son to inherit his title. "Instead, as the years passed, Edward lived with several mistresses (not of his own class), by whom he had a number of children."⁹⁹ Like the untouchables who circulated within India, Lord Ellenborough, too, became an untouchable within his own class. His life, marked by scandal, was never the same. Aristocratic women, aware of his history, rejected him as a husband, and as such, he was relegated as a lover solely to lower-class women. He died on the periphery of society as a consequence of his inability to exhibit masculine authority over his wife. Ellenborough's fate confirms hegemonic masculinity as a historically mobile relation, as suggested by R. W. Connell, since "when conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded."¹⁰⁰ This divorce illustrates the waning patriarchal power of aristocratic men and suggests that Lord Ellenborough's failure to dominate his wife led directly to the erosion of his reputation and identity, from which there was no return.

A second scandal entranced London in 1850 with the divorce of Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham-Clinton, 12th Earl of Lincoln, later Duke of Newcastle, and Lady Susan Harriet Catherine Hamilton. Henry's father, the Duke of Newcastle, a widower, was

⁹⁹ Lovell, 95.

¹⁰⁰ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 77.

charged with raising his ten children after his wife's early death.¹⁰¹ Not only did he have many children to care for, but additionally, he was encumbered by debts through his extravagance and his health was failing. On this time, he writes: "My health suddenly gave way in consequence of the long continued and intense strait upon it, and as the attack was a sort of complication of maladies, of an intermittent character with several concomitants, I am left in a shattered state."¹⁰² Worried that his daughters would not marry, Newcastle reached out to his friend, the Duke of Hamilton, with the hopes that his daughter, Georgina, might marry Hamilton's son, Lord Douglas. These exchanges ultimately resulted in the courtship of Lord Lincoln and Lady Susan, and a year later, on November 27, 1832, they were married.

In January 1834, Susan bore their first child, Henry. Like Ellenborough, Lord Lincoln possessed a seat in Parliament and was often busy with work. Lord Lincoln's father, Duke of Newcastle, warned his son of leaving his wife too often in a letter dated September 27, 1834: "Susan is very young, gay and free, she is left to herself, you being absent, her amusements and occupations are followed up without you. She is admired, naturally gratified by the admiration, and suffers by the indulgence. Advantage will be taken of a reputation for levity and easy access."¹⁰³ Acknowledging Susan's attributes and charms, Newcastle recognizes the precarious position she may find herself in if she continues to socialize without the accompaniment of her husband. Later in his journal, Newcastle chides Susan for not caring for Lincoln upon contraction of the measles: "His

¹⁰¹ Virginia Surtees, *The Lady Lincoln Scandal* (Wilby Hall, England: Michael Russell, 2000), 9.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 27.

wife does not seem to understand or to turn her mind much to nursing. His wife is giddy and he suffers himself to look complacently upon a vital evil—the seeking happiness elsewhere than at home in the domestic circle. It is a vicious poison which affects and influences every relation of life.”¹⁰⁴ It is clear from Newcastle’s letters and journals that he worried often for the happiness of his son’s marriage.

Marriage, for Susan, was not quite as she expected. “After the excitement of marriage had faded, she saw quite clearly and within the shortest time, that she was bored by Lincoln, indifferent to his career, irked by the fetters imposed by marriage, and above all, repelled by physical intercourse with her excessively demanding husband.”¹⁰⁵ Although they had a second son, Edward, the following year, their marriage proved to be characterized by absence and apathy as Susan often sought refuge with her parents in Scotland. As evidenced by a letter written November 19, 1836, Newcastle came to regret his role in orchestrating their union:

As a mother of a family Susan possesses nothing that I am accustomed to consider wise, prudent or proper. As a wife she has done great harm to Lincoln and the Hamilton connection has been the upset of my family. It has been productive of the largest source of uneasiness and affliction that my very afflicted life has produced—and now I see no hope or prospect of attenuated misfortune and disaster during the rest of my existence.¹⁰⁶

Newcastle cites Lincoln and Susan’s marriage and predicted “disaster” as the locus of his misfortune, and he would prove correct with the revelation that Susan and Lincoln’s brother, William, were engaged in a love affair.

¹⁰⁴ Surtees, 28-29.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 33-34.

Very much in love with his wife, Lincoln left his father's home (where he and Susan were when the affair was revealed) for his residence in London. In his journal, Lincoln laments: "The sight of the house and everything in it makes me feel much more lonely than if I were in a desert—perhaps I may never be otherwise than alone here again—perhaps I may be removed and the solitude may be hers."¹⁰⁷ Lincoln is crushed to discover that his life has been altered, perhaps permanently, by his wife's betrayal. Susan, reporting severe illness, visits doctors on the Continent, while he, at home with his two sons, fears the gossip that he knows will inevitably develop from his family's scandal: "Rumours were abroad, and he found nothing so painful as the society of those 'acquainted with my sorrows. Oh that I could sleep over the next six months.'"¹⁰⁸ Lincoln's pain is compounded by his hope for reconciliation, and, therefore he endures their estrangement and waits for Susan's return. Lincoln's devotion, while sweet, signals an immense change in society as he accepts his wife's discretion and prays for resolution. The legacy of Lord Ellenborough's failure to maintain hegemonic masculinity over his wife is evident in Lord Lincoln, and further confirms the aristocracy's crisis of masculinity, as Lady Susan traverses both physical and societal boundaries with little regard for her husband.

Despite continued illness, Susan bore two more children by the summer of 1840. After nine years of marriage, perhaps the first two happy, Lincoln suspected Susan of possessing a new lover, and at the end of 1841, he demanded the removal of their children from her care. Believing that a formal separation was imperative, Lincoln wrote

¹⁰⁷ Surtees, 38.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

to Susan's father, Duke of Hamilton, to express that "no misconduct on *my* part led to this miserable crisis."¹⁰⁹ For Lincoln, this truly was a crisis as it was a moment that tested his traditional values and forced him to question his role as a husband and man. Why did his wife, who was most often sick, require additional lovers when he himself was so willing and happy to be with her? Susan's rebuke of her husband initiated a wave of anger and condemnation from Lincoln. He sought legal aid to secure the children solely in his custody knowing that the law gave him the right; in doing so, he hoped to hurt her as she had hurt him.

After some time apart, Susan returned home and bore the couple's fifth child in December 1845; however, by mid-September 1847, she had run away yet again. Susan's departures and assumed infidelities, coupled with an addiction to laudanum, resulted in Lincoln's seeming ambivalence towards his wife. Susan was "desperate for an escape that would finally terminate her marriage, and for a companion in her deliberate progression towards social ruin, and she selected the married Lord Walpole (later 4th Earl of Orford)."¹¹⁰ Meanwhile at home, Lincoln remained in a state of distress: "The desolation of his ruined marriage and the loss of a wife he still loved, and the lonely responsibility of the upbringing of five children—the youngest of whom was only three years old—were burdens of an agonizing kind."¹¹¹ As Lincoln cared for their children, Susan and Walpole traveled into Germany and Italy, discreetly at first, and then with less precaution. Their love affair is reminiscent of romance novels in which intrigue and

¹⁰⁹ Surtees, 49.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

novelty equal love, something Susan was willing to sacrifice her husband and children for in hopes of securing a passionate union with Walpole.

Pregnant with Walpole's child, Susan became Mrs. Laurence, an alias she chose for herself, while in Italy. This name symbolized a break with her past as she metaphorically killed Lady Lincoln and all that she represented. The couple spent her confinement in Lake Como, although no word of her pregnancy had yet reached British shores. In a letter composed November 24, 1848, Lincoln wrote of his wife: "I never suffered in spirit so much as now, on no former occasion have I felt so sick at heart or so incapable of comfort [...] why do I feel a deeper grief now than when sorrow of this deep dye was yet young? I hope it is because on former occasions I buoyed myself with a hope to restore a Mother to my children—now I despair."¹¹² Lincoln's anguish is fully realized upon his long-time friend William Gladstone's visit to Italy, during which he confirms that Lady Susan Lincoln promenaded as Mrs. Laurence in an effort to keep her pregnancy a secret from those who know her in Britain. Gladstone wrote:

You will be shocked and stunned to hear that I can entertain no moral doubt whatever of the fact that the unhappy subject of our cares is within a few weeks, probably a few days of her delivery—this tells all... The case is beyond reasonable doubt in my view: and I conceive it to be immoral in a husband to allow such matter to remain beyond the notice of the law. There will, I cannot doubt, be a suit of divorce.¹¹³

Upon hearing his dear friend's testimony, in addition to his servant's testimony, who also went to Italy to confirm Mrs. Laurence as Susan, Lincoln contacted his solicitor concerning divorce proceedings.

¹¹² Surtees, 91.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 108.

On November 16, 1849, Lady Susan was served with divorce papers in Florence, Italy, by a former servant who spent time tracking her down. “The Bill was heard in the House of Lords for the first time on May 13th [1850], when a copy of the proceedings in the Consistory Court of London was presented at the Bar of the House. On the 28th witnesses were called, including Mr. Gladstone, and on that day the Duke of Newcastle wrote in his diary that Lincoln’s divorce Bill ‘has passed the 2nd reading. His vile and abandoned wife offered no defence.’”¹¹⁴ Lady Susan’s criminal activity became headline news, much of it, as *Leeds Mercury* suggested in a June 1, 1850, article “was unfit for publication.” Humiliated by the scandal, Lincoln remained abroad during the proceedings. Upon his return, his father became ill and died, and while Lincoln worried over how to pay his father’s vast debts, he assumed the position as the 5th Duke of Newcastle.¹¹⁵ In 1852 the Duke was appointed Secretary of State for the colonies, a “position he held for two years, when on the outbreak of the Crimean War, and until the government resigned early in 1855, he carried, as Secretary of War, the responsibility of its conduct. His health suffered under the shattering strain.”¹¹⁶ The consequences of his failed marriage and ruined reputation, in addition to the burden he endured as a result of his participation in the mismanagement of the Crimean War, resulted in a broken man who was now the shadow of his former self. In addition, four of the Duke’s five children spent extravagantly, married poorly, and in the case of his only daughter, Suzie, preferred

¹¹⁴ Surtees, 122.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

her mother's company over her caring and devoted father. The Duke never married again and died in 1864.

Lord Lincoln's reputation after his wife's numerous infidelities was never fully salvaged. In failing to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity over his wife, Lincoln's manliness was often questioned and regarded as a contributing factor to his marriage's demise. In this instance, R. W. Connell's assertion that the fragile nature of power relations effectively disrupts patriarchal power proved to be the locus of Lincoln's downfall: "Power relations show the most visible evidence of crisis tendencies in a historic collapse of legitimacy of the patriarchal power, and a global movement for the emancipation of women."¹¹⁷ Within this collapse, Lincoln's crisis of masculinity was fully realized, and as suggested earlier, with it the legitimacy of patriarchal power. Both Lords Lincoln and Ellenborough were publicly humiliated, shamed, and at times, alienated by their own class, moving them from respectable men to disgraced and fractured beings. This moment confirms the aristocracy's crisis of masculinity as a mid-century phenomenon that challenged aristocratic identity and forced them to question what it meant to be a man in a changing world.

¹¹⁷ Connell, 84.

Chapter 4

The Shadow of the House: The Evolution of Sensation's Fallen Man

Although Charles Darwin's seminal text *The Origins of Species*, published in 1859, explored the biological evolution of animals and plants, his theory of natural selection proved to be socially apropos for the time in which he was writing. Recognizing this, Herbert Spencer developed his theory of Social Darwinism from which he claimed that the "rich and powerful were better adapted to the social and economic climate of the time."¹¹⁸ Amidst tremendous historical and social change, Spencer published his work, *Principles in Biology* (1864), which propounded his vision and understanding of the survival of the fittest (a phrase he, not Darwin, coined) as a dominant quality of the wealthy. While his theory may have proved true for the majority of upper-class Victorian society, it is that small minority who did "not survive" that this chapter is primarily concerned. Despite all of the wealth and opportunity available, many aristocratic men felt lost in an ever-changing world and struggled to secure their place in it as agents of their own personhood. These men ultimately transform from masculine patriarchal figures into feminized dependents during a crisis of masculinity, as evidenced by Wilkie Collins's Basil and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's George Talboys, sensation fiction characters who succumb to social deaths that ultimately cause these men to lose their place within the patriarchy and renders them as ornamental figures as they disappear into the domestic sphere

¹¹⁸ Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought 1860-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 14.

Sensation fiction of the 1860s, such as Collins's *Basil* and Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, presented a unique perspective in which the horrors experienced in Gothic literature—betrayal, bigamy, murder, and imprisonment to name a few—occurred at home in England, instead of in foreign locales as early works of Gothic literature, such as *Romance of the Forest* and *The Monk*. This focus on realism, as opposed to the supernatural inherent in Gothic works, alerted readers to the possibility and consequences of crime, death, and the always-present secrets that most often fractured families and ultimately affected identity. As Winifred Hughes suggests, sensation novels provide an alternative vision, which struck at the roots of Victorian anxieties: “It is sensationalism that disrupts this comfortable outlook; in mingling elements of both realism and idealism, the sensation novelists create something that belong to neither.”¹¹⁹ This statement implies a liminality experienced by both the characters and the readers of sensation fiction who reside in an in-between state in which they are forced to question what is real and what is constructed. This specific genre, and the literary environments it created, provided a space for characters to explore and acknowledge the changing atmosphere inherent in Britain's political, legislative, and social evolution. Since many stories were appropriated from the newspaper headlines, sensation fiction's engagement with the issues of the day created a genre, that while recognized as low-brow and immoral, actually became social commentary on the immense transformation England was undergoing.¹²⁰ For this

¹¹⁹ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 52.

¹²⁰ Literary critic, H. L. Mansel, writes of sensation fiction: “The sensation novel, be it mere trash or something worse, is usually a tale of our own times.” Additionally, Victorian critic, Margaret Oliphant, asserts: “It is painful to inquire where it is that all of those stories of bigamy and seduction come from [...] Writers who have no genius and little talent, make up for it by displaying their acquaintance with the

chapter's purposes, I will explore the interaction between the sensation genre and masculine identity to better understand the changes in gender relations and the evolution of the position of aristocratic men during this time.

To understand the complications and consequences of the fallen man and social death, I would like to take a moment to conceptualize these terms. The fallen man offers a way in which to recognize the position of a man who has collapsed as a result of his incapacity to retain his power and purpose while in constellation with empowered women; consequently, this manifests in his unwillingness to participate within the patriarchy. While the fallen woman suggests a loss of innocence, a designation that is prescribed for her by society, the fallen man is a figure who retreats within himself after he recognizes his inability to maintain authority and agency. For this man, specifically here Basil and George, this newly-inhabited position is a foreign space in which their identities as participants within the patriarchy can no longer be salvaged. They are fallen because they are now merely shadows of the men they once were as they endure crises of masculinity and identity. This status as a fallen man is intertwined with their condition as socially dead figures. Although social death has been used to describe the condition of slaves, Holocaust survivors, immigrants, and most often today, Alzheimer's patients, this precarious state also refers to a change in the identity of an individual and the ways in which it precludes one's position as an agent of action. This term is certainly meant to evoke an extreme condition, since we must recognize that although the middle class was

accessories and surroundings of vice, with the means of seduction, and with what they set forth as the secret tendencies of the heart," in Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd*, eds. Richard Nemesvari and Lisa Surridge (Toronto: Broadview, 1998), 601.

rising in the 1850s and 60s, aristocratic men still maintained a great deal of power and influence. Basil and George's social deaths are a tremendous moment in which the natural order is questioned and in some way dismantled. For these men, their fall is not a fall from grace, but a fall from power and position, which for them, compromises their very identity and personhood.

While masculine identity is the focus of this paper, a look at women, and specifically the emergence of the New Woman, is necessary to understand the origin and the consequences of these fallen men as his existence predates and perhaps contributes to the New Woman's presence. The fallen man's existence, a direct result of his interaction with sensation's heroine, forces us to question the tremendous power and influence these women possessed. Often conniving and deceitful, bold and outspoken, these women proved to be nothing like the angels of the house Victorian society accepted and approved; instead, many of these women used their wits and assets however they needed to in order to secure their future fortune and desired social status. Sensation heroines ultimately were the harbingers of the New Woman, a recognized phenomenon of the 1880s and 90s in which women emerged from the domestic space into the public sphere, a moment that would enormously alter gender relations in Britain and abroad. Although the New Woman was a recognized figure by the 1880s, the ways in which she was portrayed and acknowledged presented dualistic interpretations:

The New Woman was by turns: a mannish amazon and a Womanly woman; she was oversexed, undersexed, or same sex identified; she was anti-maternal, or a racial supermother; she was male-identified, or manhating and/or man-eating or self-appointed saviour of benighted masculinity; she was anti-domestic or she sought to make domestic values prevail; she was radical, socialist or revolutionary, or she was reactionary

and conservative; she was the agent of social and/or racial regeneration, or symptom and agent of decline.¹²¹

This New Woman, a contradiction from conception, embodied the anxieties of the patriarchy as they were forced to recognize women as more than fixtures within the home. As harbingers of the New Woman, such sensation characters as Margaret Sherwin and Lady Audley prove to be “man-eating” agents of social degeneration and decline, at least as recognized by Basil and George, as they propel these men to their social deaths in which both Basil and George ultimately themselves become the symbol of social decline. Not surprisingly, the anxieties concerning the New Woman extended beyond her ability to affect social change as evidenced by Henry Maudsley and Charles Harper’s articulation of concern of her future offspring: “Nature, which never contemplated the production of a learned or a muscular woman, will be revenged upon her offspring, and the New Woman, if a mother at all, will be the mother of a New Man, as different, indeed, from the present race as possible.”¹²² Although they argue that the New Woman threatens the well-being of the British Empire in producing progeny raised by “overeducated” women, I contend that sensation fiction’s fallen aristocratic man, who endures a crisis of masculinity and succumbs to a social death, already threatens the British Empire from his feminized inscription, resulting in his lack of participation.

After the increased presence of women in the public sphere, men were forced to question who they were and where they belonged in a changing world that questioned

¹²¹ Lyn Pykett, *The ‘Improper’ Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), xi.

¹²² Grace A. Giorgio and Charles E. Prescott, “Vampirific Affinities: Mina Harker and the Paradox of Femininity in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” in *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33, no.1 (2005), JSTOR (accessed January 12, 2012): 488-89.

their competency as evidenced by the Crimean War and 1857 Indian Mutiny, and their position as empowered patriarchs after the Matrimonial Causes Act. Despite its reputation as low-brow literature, sensation fiction reacted to these changes—historically, politically, and socially— occurring in Britain at the time, and used these changes as fodder for reimagining gender relations. Unlike Gothic literature’s damsels in distress, sensation fiction imagined a new heroine who provoked and challenged the heroes affecting her identity and agency. These changes ultimately prompted Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon to engage with the previously unheard of notion of the fallen male, that is, the male who succumbs to a social death in which his agency and personhood is diminished. As Giorgio Agamben’s theory suggests, these men have been reduced to bare life, which is achieved once a space is created where those placed within it are stripped of not only their political or social status, but also their sense of humanity.¹²³ Although these men could participate politically or socially if they chose to, it is the trauma of losing their place in the world, of realizing they are weak against powerful women who render them socially dead. This figure, who endures a crisis of masculinity, becomes a feminized subject and is transformed into a stranger in his own land resulting in his exile, during which he is stripped of agency and personhood, culminating in his social death. Indeed, the eponymous character from Wilkie Collins’s *Basil* and George Talboys from Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady’s Audley’s Secret*, both experience social deaths at the hands of conniving and disingenuous women who break their spirits and challenge their masculinity as realized by temporary exile followed by

¹²³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

permanent cohabitation with their sisters. Through their exile and eventual cohabitation resulting in (assumed) celibacy, neither Basil nor George participate in nation-building, the Empire, or patriarchal roles from the private sphere thus rendering them as feminine figures who reside in the domestic space as dependents without agency.

Since much of sensation fiction's plots were appropriated from the newspaper headlines, it is only natural that sensation novelists would engage with the decreasing position of male power either directly or indirectly. In sensation novels a new type of man is revealed as a lost figure without a place to call his own, who ultimately finds refuge with his sister as a ghost to society. This condition is prescribed for him by sensation heroines, Collins's Margaret Sherwin and Braddon's Lucy Audley, as we will see, who in appearance represent the angel of the house, but in actuality embody the villainess as they emerge as powerful and devious women who are the dominant force behind both their own and their male partner's downfall. It is these horrors (bigamy, attempted murder, adultery) that shocked readers for taking place within a seemingly "proper, bourgeois, domestic setting."¹²⁴ Ultimately, this literary environment provided the space to question men and women's roles and re-envision an alternative narrative to the fallen female as previously seen in Gothic novels.

Although Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White* (1859) is typically heralded as the beginning of Sensation fiction, Collins's *Basil* (1852) is certainly included in the genre as this novel explores the secret and unconsummated marriage between Basil, the second son from a wealthy and prominent family, and Margaret Sherwin, a common man's

¹²⁴ Patrick Brantlinger, "What is 'Sensational' About the 'Sensation Novel?,'" in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 37, no.1 (1982), *JSTOR* (accessed February 8, 2012): 1.

daughter. Their union, riddled with betrayal from the beginning, ends badly when Basil discovers that his wife has been unfaithful; ultimately, he loses her, and consequently, his former life, once the truth is revealed. In his dedication, Collins recognizes that “On its appearance, it [*Basil*] was condemned off-hand, by a certain class of readers, as an outrage of their sense of propriety.”¹²⁵ This reaction is one Collins and Braddon would experience repeatedly as their works were often considered immoral and low-brow. Despite the criticism surrounding the genre, readers, mostly women, immersed themselves in the texts and were surprised to discover a new interpretation and suggestion of woman’s power. This reading experience intimated the fall of man, which was a new occurrence for women who most often read of the perilous danger a female encountered only to be rescued by a chivalric hero.

Basil’s story captures his transformation from agent to patient as he navigates his place in society and attempts to reconcile the alienation he feels as he straddles class divisions.¹²⁶ Basil’s fatal story begins with a chance encounter on an omnibus in London. After seeing a beautiful woman he is immediately struck by her: “I felt her influence on me directly—an influence that I cannot describe—an influence which I had never experienced in my life before.”¹²⁷ After learning that he is infatuated with the daughter of a linen draper, Basil questions whether he still loves her despite this knowledge, and decides that he does: “Prudence, duty, memories and prejudices of home, were all absorbed and forgotten in love—love that I encouraged, that I dwelt over in the first

¹²⁵ Wilkie Collins, *Basil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), xliii.

¹²⁶ Patient here refers to a lack of agency in which both Basil and George are static figures; the rhetoric of patienthood certainly applies as well since both men suffer as dependents within their sisters’ homes.

¹²⁷ Collins, 29.

reckless luxury of a new sensation.”¹²⁸ Basil’s obsession with Margaret results in his visiting her home and speaking with her father, declaring to him, Mr. Sherwin, his desire to marry Margaret with the stipulation that it must be kept secret due to his fear of his father’s reaction: “My father, on whom I am dependent as the younger son, has very strong prejudices—convictions I ought to call them—on the subject of social inequalities [...] Therefore, we must keep the courtship and marriage a secret.”¹²⁹ Basil’s first word choice, prejudices, confirms the inexorable fear that he possesses toward his intolerant father; despite this, Basil still chooses to marry Margaret, and while he does not view this as an act of betrayal against his blood line and family lineage, this act certainly forces him to negotiate who he was with who he will become.

In fear that Margaret’s reputation will be ruined if Basil’s father discovers their secret engagement and marriage, Mr. Sherwin proposes his own stipulation:

You should marry my daughter—privately marry her—in a week’s time. Supposing, then you marry her in this way, I make one stipulation. I require you to give me your word of honour to leave her at the church door; and for the space of one year never to attempt to see her, except in the presence of a third party. At the end of that time, I will engage to give her to you, as your wife in fact, as well as in name.¹³⁰

This marriage, contracted in secret, proves to be Basil’s downfall: “Up to the time of my marriage, I have appeared as an active agent in the different events I have prescribed.

After that period, and—with one or two exceptional cases—throughout the whole year of my probation, my position changed with the change in my life, and became a passive

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 67-8.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 81-2.

one.”¹³¹ Basil’s transformation from agent to patient occurs as he waits an entire year to claim his wife, which he agrees to as a gentleman, but it is this very agreement that prompts his bride to dismiss his masculinity and ultimately dooms their relationship from the start. Collin’s construction of this secret marriage and year of probation forces us to question Basil’s character as he marries but agrees to wait an entire year to consummate his union. In this way, their marriage is no union at all, but an agreement between men in which the commoner ultimately has the upper hand. From the beginning, Basil is rendered impotent as he succumbs to both his own father’s and Mr. Sherwin’s desires. Unlike the heroes of Gothic literature, La Motte and the Marquis in *Romance of the Forest*, Raymond in *The Monk*, and Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* who all remain the architects of their lives, Basil surrenders his future to fear, duty, and obligation; the moment he and Margaret are legally wed, despite its outward disobedience, actually marks the moment in which he transforms from agent to patient.¹³²

Despite being legally married, Margaret is still “covered” by her father even though under the coverture laws Basil would and should subsume Margaret’s legal rights. Under Mr. Sherwin’s proposition, he retains the rights of his daughter, and posits Basil as an ornamental figure who possesses none of the rights—physical or legal—a husband then had over his wife. This representation of marriage suggests Basil’s impotency and failure to play an active role in his life, ultimately positing him as a feminine figure. In

¹³¹ Collins, 101.

¹³² La Motte and the Marquis, characters from Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest*, are typical Gothic villains as they imprison Adeline and wield their patriarchal power to maintain their position. Although La Motte ends up in a prison and the Marquis poisons himself, these men’s fates are ultimately determined by their own choices and agency. *Northanger Abbey*’s Henry Tilney, the novel’s hero, remains firmly in control as he engages with Catherine and ultimately marries her despite his father’s disapproval.

accepting his position, Basil situates himself as a voiceless being who allows others to dictate his life's terms for him. In hindsight, Basil recognizes that during this time his life became a "passive one"; however, it is during these moments of transit that he most represents a bride, an ornamental figure without the ability to do and say as he pleases. Basil's chaperoned presence in the Sherwin household is further complicated by Robert Mannion's arrival. Mr. Sherwin's assistant and right-hand man, Margaret's former tutor, and close family friend, Mannion is presented as a foil to Basil since he holds sway over Mr. Sherwin. Although Mannion remains silent about his history, he possesses a voice in a way that Basil does not—he guides Mr. Sherwin and thus has influence over their home. In a moment of intimacy, Mannion confides to Basil that he believes Mr. Sherwin's year probation is too strict and suggests that he will talk to Mr. Sherwin to allow more time between the young lovers. This offer situates Mannion as Basil's ally when his influence proves to provide Basil more time with Margaret under loosened supervision.

After his marriage, Basil's life is fractured in two as he is forced to negotiate his identity as a wealthy second son and the secret husband of a commoner. Basil constantly lies to his father and sister, Clara, concerning his daily whereabouts, and his only exposure to Margaret is over books in the living room under the watch of her mother. Basil is ultimately relegated to a liminal space in which the position of his past and the arrangement of his present cannot collide or else he is doomed. Of course, the entire construction of his marriage is predicated on Margaret's faithful participation. After visiting his father and sister at their country home, Basil returns to London and visits

Margaret. He is immediately struck by a marked change in both her and Mannion. He ponders: “I left Margaret and Mr. Mannion well—I returned, and found them both ill. Surely this was something that had taken place in my absence, though they all said that nothing had happened.”¹³³ Despite questioning their behavior, Basil fails to analyze or fully consider the possible reasons behind both Margaret and Mannion’s different attitudes. This dismissal suggests an innocence and gullibility of character, traits Basil has been able to preserve due to his wealthy upbringing and lack of real-world experiences.

Within Basil’s year probation he has transformed from an active participant in his life to a passive one, ultimately culminating into a figure gone mad. When Basil visits Margaret on the final night of his probation and discovers that she is at her aunt’s party, accompanied by Mannion, he sets out to join them, but upon his arrival he witnesses Mannion and Margaret entering a cab together. Believing they are going home to the Sherwin residence, Basil follows them, but soon realizes he is mistaken. He observes:

Margaret and Mannion hastily left the cab, and without looking either to the right or the left, hurried down the street. They stopped at the ninth house. I followed just in time to hear the door closed on them, and to count the number of doors intervening between them and the Square. The awful thrill of suspicion which I hardly knew yet for what it really was, began to creep over me—to creep like a dead-cold touch crawling through and through me to the heart. I looked up at the house. It was an hotel—a neglected, deserted, dreary-looking building. I listened; and through the thin partition, I heard voices—*her* voice, and *his* voice. *I heard and I knew*—knew my degradation in all its infamy, knew my wrongs in all their nameless horror. He was exulting in the patience and secrecy which had brought success to the foul plot, foully hidden for months and months;

¹³³ Collins, 147.

foully hidden until the very day I was to have claimed as my wife, a wretch as guilty as himself!¹³⁴

In this moment, Basil's small and protected world opens up to all of the horrors and ugliness that he had been shielded from. The realization of truth creeps over him like a "dead-cold touch" from which he never recovers. The shock of this moment causes Basil to remain partially dead and cold for the remainder of his life, like a vampire, who is neither fully alive nor dead. Additionally, the moment of hearing their voices—Margaret's and Mannion's—alerts Basil that his own voice has been silenced for far too long. For Basil, there is an important connection between being heard and knowing the truth as if to actively listen reveals all that was there all along. Without hesitation, then, Basil casts Margaret as fully accountable as Mannion for their deceit, and it is this realization that ultimately crushes him and sends him into madness as he recognizes that both his masculinity and identity are in crisis. After Mannion emerges from the hotel, Basil confronts him, and in a moment of clouded anguish, he beats Mannion with the intention to kill him.

The trauma of that night, of discovering the truth about Margaret and Mannion and their capacity for deceit, affects Basil indefinitely. He falls ill shortly after his encounter with Mannion and for many weeks he remains in a feverish state. One day, however, Basil recovers: "But though they gave up my life as lost, I was not to die. There came a time, at last, when the gnawing fever lost its hold; and I awoke faintly one morning to a new existence—to a life frail and helpless as the life of a new-born babe."¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Collins, 159-160.

¹³⁵ Collins, 175.

Basil never fully recuperates in body and soul; this feeling is further exacerbated upon revealing the truth of his secret marriage to his father. After his confession, Basil's fears are confirmed when his father denounces him as his son: "I have no faith or hope in you more. I know you now, only as an enemy to me and to my house—it is mockery and hypocrisy to call you son. Now, Sir, we treat together as strangers."¹³⁶ In this moment, Basil is expelled from his home and forced to start life anew, disconnected and fragmented from the life he once knew and the man he once was. He is a stranger in his own home, and after residing temporarily in the impoverished district of London, he is a stranger in his own city as well. Basil muses: "As a stranger I had been driven from my home, and as a stranger I was resigned to live."¹³⁷ After losing his wife, this moment confirms Basil's social death as he has lost his family, his home, his position, and his name. Socially, Basil is an outcast, a ghost on the periphery of society who upon the suggestion of Clara and his brother, Ralph, leaves London and moves to Cornwall. This exile confirms Basil's status as socially dead as he is first denied by his father, and then, upon moving to Cornwall, by the Cornish themselves: "The Cornish felt half inclined to identify me with these mysterious visitors—to consider me as some being, a stranger to the whole human family, who had come to waste away under a curse, and die ominously and secretly among them."¹³⁸ The rhetoric here again suggests a half-dead being that Basil has been transformed into. Despite remaining in England, Basil's strangeness

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹³⁸ Collins, 313.

follows him in transit ultimately transforming him into an alien to be questioned and feared.

Basil's tenuous position as a resident of Cornwall suggests his inability to comfortably belong anywhere since he has failed to imbed himself within the community. After his experience with Margaret and his exile from home, Basil's crisis of masculinity is fully realized as he is reduced to a quasi-man, since physiologically he remains a man, but socially he fails to fulfill the requirements of his gender. Basil subsequently fails to demonstrate any active role in his life after Mannion follows him to Cornwall and confronts him, and instead of finishing what he started, Basil runs away. We see a disfigured and nearly unrecognizable Mannion, created from Basil's hands at the moment when reality and madness intersected, who has returned with the hope of revenge against Basil. As both men walk along the precipice of the Cornish cliffs we are reminded of Victor Frankenstein and his monster, crossing the snowy white abyss of the Arctic. Basil and Mannion, his deformed creation, chase one another and this barren space provides refuge for the "monster" to exist in constellation with Basil, the two bodies crossing into unknown territory also suggest what Katarzyna Marciniak refers to as "trespassing bodies"—those who ultimately reside in a place of liminality in which their disorientation and unfamiliarity marks their otherness.¹³⁹ Despite the refuge and solitude of the Cornish cliffs, this space circumscribes both Basil and Mannion as an alien presence since their trespassing confirms them as strangers in this space both marked domestic and foreign. And although Basil has a momentary desire to truly kill Mannion, he stops himself from

¹³⁹ Katarzyna Marciniak, *Alienhood: Citizenship, Exile, and the Logic of Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

reaching for Mannion's throat and instead flees. In disgust, Mannion shakes his fist at Basil and loses his balance; he falls into the cliffs with only a splash of water to suggest that he was ever there at all. Basil passes on the chance to seek revenge and finish the job he started many months ago, confirming his lack of masculine agency which would encourage such a duel after Mannion's affair with his wife.¹⁴⁰

The encounter with Mannion leaves Basil shaken as he again struggles to find his place in the world. He becomes ill and word is sent home to Clara and Ralph who rescue him. Although he makes up with his father and is welcome in the family home again, Basil remains a shell of the man he once was:

For the last five months I have lived here with Clara—here, on the little estate which was once her mother's, which is now hers [...] The years of retirement which I spent at the Hall, after my recovery, have not awakened in me a single longing to return to the busy world [...] I am still resolved to live on in obscurity, in retirement, in peace. I have suffered too much; I have been wounded too sadly, to range myself with the heroes of Ambition, and fight my way upwards from the ranks [...] To live more and more worthy, with every day, of the sisterly love which, never tiring, never changing, watches over me in this last retreat, this dearest home—these are the purposes, the only purposes left, which I still cherish.¹⁴¹

In residing with his sister at her estate, Basil ultimately confines himself within the domestic space, as a feminized subject, and relinquishes any patriarchal power he could have assumed. Basil is content to remain single and takes pleasure in Clara watching over him. Basil's resignation from society confirms his crisis of masculinity, social death, and his status as a fallen man; this existence further exacerbates his strangeness as a male

¹⁴⁰ Speaking of his wife, after visiting Mannion in the hospital, Margaret contracts typhoid and dies a sad death. Despite her treatment towards Basil, he visits her on her deathbed and she mocks him for his gentleman behavior telling him that he deserved their affair since he was not man enough to act like a real husband.

¹⁴¹ Collins, 341-42.

figure of means who fails to contribute to the patriarchy. As Sara Ahmed suggests, strangers are suspicious because “they have no purpose; that is, they have no legitimate function within the space which could justify their existence or intrusion.”¹⁴² Thus, as she explains, the proximity of strangers within the nation space is a mechanism for the demarcation of the national body and a way of defining borders within it. Ultimately, then, Basil functions as a fallen man, who despite wealth and opportunity, fails to emerge beyond the domestic space, and instead, resides as an alien presence threatening English national identity through his lack of purpose and participation.

Echoing Collins’s construction of a feminized and fallen man is Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s anti-hero George Talboys in *Lady Audley’s Secret*. Like Basil, George is also forced to endure a social death when he is lied to by his wife, Helen-turned-Lucy Audley, and is forced into exile at her hands. Perhaps even more so than her predecessor, Braddon drastically re-imagines gender roles as her heroine, Lady Audley, possesses the capacity and ability to disrupt traditional social roles. More so than Margaret Sherwin, Lady Audley represents a woman trying to exist under the patriarchal social conventions that determine a woman’s fate at this time.¹⁴³ To preserve her hard-earned life, Lady Audley “murders” George Talboys, and despite his bodily survival, she compels him into a space of nonexistence as realized through his social death. By ultimately residing with Robert and Clara, his sister, George becomes a figure that socially ceases to exist as he is reduced to a stranger within their home, socially alienated and alone.

¹⁴² Sara Ahmed, *Stranger Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 31.

¹⁴³ Helen Talboys fakes her own death after George is denounced by his father and sets sail to make his fortune in Australia. Not content with her poor reality, she “kills” herself and finds work as a tutor before she weds Lord Audley and transforms herself from a poor girl into the lady of an estate.

Upon George Talboys's marriage to Helen Maldon, George's father disinherits him for marrying beneath his class. Similar to Basil's experience with his father, Mr. Talboys circumscribes George into a social death, however, unlike Basil, it is this death which has little effect on his son's life. Harcourt Talboys tells Robert: "My son did me an unpardonable wrong by marrying the daughter of a drunken pauper. And from that hour, I no longer had a son. I wish him no ill. He is simply dead to me."¹⁴⁴ This disinheritance is reminiscent of the Jewish practice of *Kaddish*, in which, as John Edgar Wideman explains, a father declares his child, who has committed an unforgivable crime, dead. He further explains: "The child becomes a nonperson, cut off absolutely from all contact, a shadow the father will not acknowledge, a ghost referred to in the past tense as who he once was."¹⁴⁵ Despite his father's renouncement of him, George enjoys the first year of his marriage with Helen, tours the continent, has a child, and after experiencing the bitter position of poverty, he leaves for Australia to make his fortune. These actions confirm George's ambivalence towards his father's condemnation as he maintains his agency and seeks fortune for himself and his family.

Upon returning to England from Australia, George serendipitously runs into his old friend, Robert Audley, and together they depart for the coffeehouse where George hopes a letter from his wife will be waiting. Instead, George discovers Helen's obituary in *The Times* and must reconcile his dreams for their future with the reality of his widowed existence. Despite the tragedy, George is reunited with his son when he visits his father-in-law, and although this should be a moment of overwhelming love for a son

¹⁴⁴ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 184-5.

¹⁴⁵ John Edgar Wideman, *My Brother's Keeper* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005), 187.

he has not seen since he was an infant, instead, recognizing Georgey's fondness for his grandfather, George immediately dictates the terms of his son's education and determines the amount of money needed to sustain his life. George, who intends to return to Australia, also appoints Robert Audley as Georgey's guardian who protests the role and suggests that George himself would be better suited to care for his child: "I think for his own sake he'd much better stay in England and look after his son."¹⁴⁶ George's behavior illustrates the heaviness of his grief which consequently causes him to neglect his child.

A year after his wife's death, George looks the same but recognizes changes within. He parallels his feelings with that of wounded British soldiers: "When some of our fellows were wounded in India, they came home bringing bullets inside them. They did not talk of them, and they were stout and hearty, and looked as well, perhaps, as you or I; but every change in the weather, however slight, every variation of the atmosphere, however trifling, brought back the old agony of their wounds as sharp as ever they had felt it on the battle-field. I've had my wound, Bob; I carry the bullet still, and I shall carry it into my coffin."¹⁴⁷ In creating a metaphor linking wounded British soldiers with himself, George recognizes and articulates the pain he, and the soldiers, feel as they both return to their homeland and find themselves injured beings who are forever affected by their physical and emotional damages. Additionally, both George and the British soldiers endure a loss of masculinity that further fractures their identities. This rhetoric reminds us also of George's position as an outsider, since upon his return to England his identity is dismantled and he, neither invested in himself nor England, fails to participate in the

¹⁴⁶ Braddon, 48.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

patriarchy as someone in his position would during this time. Additionally, George's inability to cultivate favor with his son, despite the sweets and toys he presents to Georgey, further inscribes George as a stranger who possesses no home or family.

George's precarious position as a man of social status without purpose is fully realized upon meeting Lady Audley, who we suspect, and later confirm, is actually George's wife Helen. Recognizing this, George leaves Robert by the pond and calls on Audley Court in what we assume is to interrogate his wife who he believes to be dead. It is only after his confrontation with Lady Audley, when she pushes him into the well, that his resistance to social death falters and he accepts his fate as dictated by his former wife.¹⁴⁸ This moment fully confirms George's crisis of masculinity as he succumbs to his wife's wishes, even if that means he must become a shadow of himself. After Luke, Lady Audley's housemaid's husband, discovers George in the well, he brings him home, and later, tells Robert that George had "to be cared for like a baby, and dressed and dried, and washed, and fed with spoonfuls of brandy that had to be forced between his locked teeth, before any life could be got into him."¹⁴⁹ After the trauma of first losing his wife, then discovering her existence as another woman, George is physically and emotionally a broken man as he collapses into a helpless condition similar to a baby. Luke tells Robert of the state he found George in and how he feared to be seen: "I want to get away from this place without bein' seen by any livin' creetur, remember that. I've been lyin' here

¹⁴⁸ Lillian Nayder's article "Rebellious Sepoys and Bigamous Wives: The Indian Mutiny and Marriage Law Reform in *Lady Audley's Secret*," referenced earlier, presents the image of the well as a symbol of Indian cruelty and barbarism since English men, women, and children who were killed, raped, and mutilated by the Indians during the Rebellion of 1857 were subsequently discarded in the well, similar to how Lady Audley disposes of George.

¹⁴⁹ Braddon, 411.

since four o'clock to-day, and I'm half dead, but I want to get away without bein' seen."¹⁵⁰ George's state as a broken man, literally and emotionally, confirms Lady Audley's power over him; despite her small stature, she physically pushed George into the well, positing her as the agent of his fate. Ultimately, Lady Audley transformed a strong, viril man into a helpless and weak being whose only goal is to become a stranger to everyone, including himself. This moment marks Lady Audley's triumph as she is the architect behind George's collapse as a patriarchal figure and a man of agency.

Robert, whose behavior changes dramatically once he realizes his friend is missing, devotes his life to solving George's disappearance. In search of the truth, Robert visits with Luke who shares letters written by George to himself and Lucy. In a letter to Robert, George writes: "I can only tell you that something has happened which will drive me from England, a broken-hearted man, to seek some corner of the earth in which I may live and die unknown and forgotten."¹⁵¹ In a subsequent letter to Lucy he assures her: "Rest in peace. You shall never hear of me again; to you and to the world, I shall henceforth be that which you wished me to be to-day. You need fear no molestation from me."¹⁵² In these letters, George acknowledges his lack of agency against Lady Audley, and he leaves England alienated from the life he created for himself. His crisis of masculinity and status as a stranger is fully realized as he once again disappears to a foreign country and isolates himself as an anonymous figure. Ultimately, this moment of

¹⁵⁰ Braddon, 415.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 412.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 413.

exile confirms Lady Audley's ability to sentence George to an absolute social death, unlike that which George's father attempted.

It is ultimately George's return to England, and most notably his living arrangement, residing with Robert and Clara, that fully confirms his crisis of masculinity and social death as he is stagnant, unmarried, and therefore without a social position. Although George's son resides in the same space as his father, it is Robert and Clara who raise him, alongside their own baby: "He is very happy with his uncle Robert, his aunt Clara, and the pretty baby who has just begun to toddle."¹⁵³ As Tosh suggests it is the creation of a home that represents the emblem of masculinity: "In most societies that we know of, setting up a new household is the essential qualification of manhood. The man who speaks for familial dependants and who can transmit his name and his assets to future generations is fully masculine."¹⁵⁴ With no home or family to call his own, George is transformed into a feminized figure and despite the narrator's half-hearted attempt to remain optimistic about George's future—"He is a young man yet, remember, and it is not quite impossible that he may by-and-by find some one who will be able to console him for the past. There may come a time in which the shadow my lady's wickedness has cast upon the young man's life, will utterly vanish away"—it appears as if George, nearly absent in the final chapter, represents a ghostly presence living with his married sister in Teddington, has relinquished any other fate, since his heartbreak over Helen and her socially fatal blow to him as a man of social existence or position has led George to

¹⁵³ Braddon, 435.

¹⁵⁴ John Tosh, "New Men? The Bourgeois Cult of Home," in *Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Society*, ed. Gordon Marsden (London: Longman Publishing, 1990), 36.

transform into a fallen man and merely exist as a patient without agency.¹⁵⁵ Ultimately, George becomes a ward of Robert and Clara, and like Basil, a dependent, who seeks asylum with family, forfeiting individual status and identity.

As these novels suggest, as well as previous evidence concerning the aristocracy's involvement in the Crimean War and interaction with divorce, the aristocracy's masculinity and identity were in decline by the 1860s. Despite the aristocracy's wealth, power, and position, it was the middle class at this time that survived and thrived. Surprisingly, it is Robert Audley's transformation from a man of leisure to a man of purpose that confirms this observation. For instance, early on Robert is described as "a handsome, lazy, care-for-nothing fellow [...] who exhausted himself with the exertion of smoking his German pipe and reading French novels."¹⁵⁶ Robert begins the novel as a feminized figure who admits to his domestic preferences: "Why, man, I don't know a partridge from a pigeon. I never hit a bird in my life, but I have hurt my own shoulder with the weight of my gun. I only go down to Essex for the change of air, the good dinners, and the sign of my uncle's honest, handsome face."¹⁵⁷ Instead of hunting with the men, Robert reads his novels and smokes his pipe, in the company of women, ambivalent to the gender shift he participates in. It is only after he launches the investigation to find George Talboys that his life finds purpose. This quest ultimately becomes Robert's moment of transformation as his investigation moves him from his

¹⁵⁵ Braddon, 436.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

feminized inscription within the domestic space into the public sphere as a respected masculine man.

After Robert discovers Lady Audley's complicity and guilt in George's disappearance, he sends her to a sanatorium to spend the rest of her days. Afterwards, recognizing the vast changes in his character, Robert remarks: "How can I believe that it was I who used to lounge all day in this easy-chair reading Paul de Kock, and smoking mild Turkish [...] Heaven knows I have learnt the business of life since then."¹⁵⁸ After marrying Clara—who "lectures him on the purposeless life he had led for so long, and the little use he had made of his talents and opportunities that had been given to him"—Robert actively becomes a barrister, winning notoriety for a case, and moves to a middle-class suburb of London.¹⁵⁹ Despite Clara's harsh words, Robert values them and remarks how pleasant it is to humiliate himself before her, confirming his belief in woman's right to speak her mind. Ultimately, Robert exiles himself from reading novels and smoking pipes in favor of work and family; this transformation suggests a shift in class identity, from upper to middle, and thus a move of survival in which he prospers with a wife, child, and home. Robert's success, and thus survival, is a contrast to Basil and George's existence in which they quietly reside with their sisters, and like the women Mary Wollstonecraft wrote of, they, too, become ornaments within the domestic space. This inscription suggests an arrested development, or social death, of which Basil and George do not survive and thus are relegated to patients without agency. Ultimately, then, Robert represents social Darwinism in action as he crosses class lines and succeeds at

¹⁵⁸ Braddon, 393-94.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 427.

establishing himself as a “rising man” who is rewarded with a happy home, moving him from the liminal space he previously occupied as a feminine subject into a masculine agent with an active and purposeful existence.¹⁶⁰ Although Robert should have inherited Audley Court, his move to the suburbs confirms a break with his past, and ultimately a rewriting of his history, as he traverses the borders between the upper and middle classes and saves himself from becoming another one of sensation’s fallen men, evolving instead into England’s modern man.

¹⁶⁰ Randa Helfield suggests of Robert Audley’s metamorphous: “Braddon’s novel may be read as the story of his [Robert’s] transformation from a passive and rather effeminate reader of foreign fiction into an active writer in the detective genre, a transformation that makes him both man and hero [...] Robert becomes the author of his own destiny, instead of the helpless witness of other people’s plots,” in “Poisonous Plots: Women Sensation Novelists and Murderesses of the Victorian Period,” *Victorian Review* 21, no.2 (1995), *JSTOR* (accessed February 8, 2012).

CONCLUSION

In 1896, American heiress, Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, married the Duke of Marlborough at the insistence of her mother. Soon afterwards the Duke told his new wife, “that he had given up the girl he loved, to marry her, because to live at Blenheim [his family estate] in the pomp and circumstance he considered essential needed money, and a sense of duty to his family and to his traditions indicated the sacrifice of personal desires.”¹⁶¹ Their marriage, contracted through an agreed arrangement, came to its demise eleven years later. We see a similar marital construction on *Downton Abbey* in which Lord Grantham marries American heiress, Cora, in an effort to ease the financial burdens of his family estate. After a year of marriage, Lord Grantham admits that he is in love with Cora, and although his union is ultimately a success, the financial woes that spurred him to marry his wife in the first place are never far away.

With the onset of the Great War, *Downton Abbey* finds itself again in financial difficulty as Lord Grantham’s investments nearly bankrupt the family. Matthew Crawley, Lord Grantham’s third cousin and heir (since Robert and Cora Crawley did not produce a son), a solicitor by trade, recognizes the inefficiency in which *Downton* has been managed. He alerts Robert to the possibility for productivity and better cost efficiency; aghast by these suggestions of change, Robert rejects Matthew’s ideas and storms away. At the same time, Robert’s youngest daughter, Sybil, has married his former chauffeur, Tom Branson, an Irish Catholic Republican, and thus the antithesis of everything Robert

¹⁶¹ Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, 1989), 63.

stands for and values. He witnesses his daughters, both Sybil and Edith, cut their hair and assert their independence and autonomy despite his protests. Amidst these changes, Lord Grantham struggles to maintain his patriarchal authority over his estate and family. His existence as a progenitor with absolute power is dismantled with the culmination of the Great War; afterwards, he endures a crisis of masculinity as he helplessly observes the vast changes that have challenged and collapsed his very identity.

The trajectory of Britain's crisis of masculinity can be traced to the 1850s and 60s when the aristocracy endured a masculine crisis that forever compromised their patriarchal influence. Decades later, other members of society, particularly the middle class, also experienced a decline in masculine power due to economic and social changes. Additionally, military involvement further yielded moments of crisis as men were forced to traverse psychic and social, physical and emotional, boundaries for which they were often ill-prepared. Beginning with the Crimean War and culminating with the Great War, these military crises disprove John Tosh's superficial assertion that, "Only at times of popular alarm about the nation's military readiness, like the late 1850s and 60s, and the first decade of the twentieth century, did vestiges of aristocratic manliness reappear in the mainstream."¹⁶² Elaine Showalter, instead, suggests that the shell shock men experienced as a result of their time on the Western Front was emasculating and effeminizing; this condition crystallized into "male hysteria" from which soldiers felt themselves to be less

¹⁶² John Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *History Workshop* (No. 38, 1994), 182.

than a man, as this state was inextricably linked to female hysteria.¹⁶³ Traumatized soldiers, thus, were regarded as feminized beings who did not fit within society's manly archetypes, and as such, they occupied a space on the periphery as something other than fully masculine.

The aristocracy's crisis of masculinity possesses a legacy that is still evident today. Similar to men after the Civil War, economic crises have manifested into crises of identity and masculinity as men struggle to remain employed and prove their worth.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, shifts in gender roles continue to confront men as they oftentimes cling to the last vestiges of patriarchal power. When considering the vast transformation western societies have undergone in the past one hundred and fifty years, we must wonder, then, what about a crisis of femininity? Is this, too, on the horizon as empowered and educated women earn more and do more? If a crisis of femininity does occur, will it herald true equality between the sexes? If that day comes, women, too, may traverse psychic and social, physical and emotional borders during which they question what it means to be fully feminine in a changing world.

¹⁶³ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 21.

¹⁶⁴ Ray B. Williams, "Our Male Identity Crisis: What Will Happen to Men?" in *Psychology Today*, 19 July 2010.

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